Tamil TIMES

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Govt-LTTE exchanged POWs on 28 September – Navy Capt. Ajith Boyagoda (R) released after 8 years in captivity.
Below: Protesters including school children in demonstration on 1 October outside the STF camp in Ampara in east Sri Lanka

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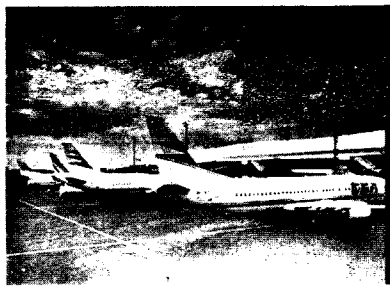

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-Voltaire

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A Fragile Situation

The government and the LTTE are preparing for the second round of direct talks in Thailand on 31 October. But a series of incidents accompanied by violence, resulting in 9 deaths and several persons being injured, all occurring within a span of a few weeks, have cast a dark cloud over the future of the peace process. So much so the much taxed head of the international Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) has described the situation that has developed as sensitive and fragile in which tension has been created and fear psychosis has grown.

The series of incidents began on 2 September with the attempted storming of the Brigade Headquarters in Point Pedro by thousands of demonstrators demanding free passage through the High Security Zone resulting in the troops using fire power, followed by the cowardly attack on the Hartley College Principal.

Then there was the arrest by government forces of two LTTE cadres allegedly in possession of weapons who were remanded in custody by a Court. In an act of tit-for-tat retaliation, the LTTE took into custody seven soldiers who they said would not be released until the two LTTE cadres were freed. The refusal to free the soldiers prompted demonstrations in Trincomalee demanding their release.

On 1 October there was a massive orchestrated demonstration accompanied by the use of violence in the vicinity of the Special Task Force Camp in the Ampara district in the east demanding the opening up of the adjoining highway which had remained closed at least for the last ten years. This was followed on 9 October by another bigger demonstration in which at least a crowd of thousand persons participated. According the SLMM, the crowd broke through the main entrance and a barbed fire fence and entered the STF camp. Members of the crowd threw stones, burned tyres and shooting with firearms. The STF used teargas and fired rubber-bullets at the crowd and then used live ammunition. 7 people died and 14 more were injured. In the days that followed tensions were heightened as well organised hartals and protest marches paralysed the North-east following this tragic incident.

On 11 October, two people were killed and several others injured in a grenade explosion at Uppuveli in the eastern Trincomalee district. The security situation was fast deteriorating and curfews had to imposed and troops called out to maintain law and order.

Even as the situation was slowly returning to normal, tensions between the Muslim and Tamil communities developed in Akkaraipattu in the east following the alleged abduction by the LTTE of a Muslim youth believed to be the brother of the EPDP leader of the area on 15 October. Though the LTTE denied involvement, the Muslims called for a hartal. General life came to a standstill as shops remained closed and tyres were burnt on the roads. Transport too was disrupted as logs and concrete blocks were placed on the main roads blocking vehicular traffic Additional security service personnel had to be deployed and a curfew imposed to prevent an outbreak of violence between the two communities.

These events have produced a climate of uncertainty in the minds of many people about the prospects of peace returning for good. But the people too have their own responsibility. They ought to recognise the distinction between their own interests and those of the parties that seek to govern them. The parties may want peace, but at the same time they also seek power. But the people want peace to lead a normal life with their basic rights assured. In this context, we commend the call by the Head of the SLMM: "The public probably has the most important role. Do not believe everything you hear. Do not listen to those who promote violence, listen to yourselves and those who want to protect lives. You must have the courage not to accept injustice from anyone. The best way to support the responsible authorities on both sides is to report injustice done to you and assist in identifying the forces that commit or try to spark violence. Avoid hartals and demonstrations that can create dangerous situations. Support each other."

It has to be said that, in the difficult and troublesome situation, the work undertaken so far by the SLMM in defusing tensions and resolving disputes has been commendable. The task of its hardworking Head, Major General Trond Furuovde, has not been an easy one. The attempts by the parties or their adherents to contravene the provisions of the Ceasefire Agreement and gain advantage over each other have not made the task of the Major and his Mission any easier. On the contrary, what has been demonstrated very clearly is that the SLMM and its resources are over-stretched and inadequate for the purpose in terms of men and material. The time has come for the parties and the Norwegian facilitators to consider inducting assistance to augment the SLLM from other countries that have declared a commitment to the peace process in Sri Lanka.

"Situation fragile and sensitive"

- SLLM Head

"Recent violent events in Ampara and Trincomalee districts have clearly shown how fragile and sensitive the situation is at this time in the peace process. Innocent people have once again lost their lives or been injured, tension has been created and fear psychosis has grown," the head of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM), Major General Trond Furuhovde said on 17 October after briefing Sri Lanka's Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe on the recent violence in eastern Sri Lanka, mainly in the districts of Ampara and Trincomalee.

The full text of the SLMM statement is as follows:

"Recent violent events in Ampara and Trincomalee districts have clearly shown how fragile and sensitive the situation is at this time in the peace process. Innocent people have once again lost their lives or been injured, tension has been created and fear psychosis has grown. You have seen irresponsible and destructive elements in the society attempting to break the confidence you have carefully built up during the ceasefire. These elements do not want a peaceful solution to the conflict and are ready to sacrifice lives of innocent people to achieve their goals. You must also be aware that there can be considerable difference between the parties and the individuals in their ranks. Sometimes a Government soldier or a cadre is involved in violent or irresponsible behaviour. That does not mean that the Government or the LTTE is behind such behaviour. Disloyal members of both parties will eventually be identified. I have seen that the top leaders of both parties and their commanders on the ground are determined to promote the peaceful situation in Sri Lanka so that the peace talks can succeed.

"The strong will for peace among those who are responsible in this country has also been demonstrated following the recent violence. SLMM is now supporting the Government forces and the LTTE in increasing close cooperation and direct communications between their commanders in the North and East. They must talk to each other and work together, because that is the best way to handle volatile situations on the ground and prevent violence. These efforts have already given a positive signal for the future. The Political Headquarters of LTTE in Kilinochchi have promised full participation and agreed to support such work. After my meetings with Ranil Wickremesinghe, Prime Minister of Sri Lanka and Tilak Marapone, Minister of Defence, on Monday, it is clear that this cooperation will be increased in the near future. After these meetings, it is also clear that the concept of operations of the Police in the North and East needs to be adjusted. This will improve normalcy and be of direct benefit to the public in these areas. We discussed the necessity of identifying irresponsible and destructive elements and the importance of quick reaction to prevent violence.

"Sometimes I hear that members of the armed forces feel they are being forced to bend backwards as if it were a negative situation. But in this situation, bending backwards is a professional behaviour to avoid violence and bloodshed. The police must be firm and professional in maintaining law and order. They must be well trained and able to handle difficult situations such as demonstrations in a peaceful manner. The Army and the STF must avoid using unnecessary force and show discipline and flexibility in cooperation with LTTE. The Navy must control the territorial sea avoiding unnecessary provocation. The Sea Tigers of the LTTE must also avoid provocation and show discipline. The LTTE has to take responsibility, demonstrate care for their people and respect democratic values. The public probably has the most important role. Do not believe everything you hear. Do not listen to those who promote violence, listen to yourselves and those who want to protect lives. You must have the courage not to accept injustice from anyone. The best way to support the responsible authorities on both sides is to report injustice done to you and assist in identifying the forces that commit or try to spark violence. Avoid hartals and demonstrations that can create dangerous situations. Support each other.

"I am convinced that both the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE are solidly behind the Peace Process. But they need the support from all of us. Follow a courageous leadership that cares about the country's future and takes responsibility. We also, must practice patience, justice and courage in our daily life. And through the common effort of every individual in every corner of the country we can secure a Peaceful Future.

Major General Trond Furuhovde Head of SLMM"

7 lose their lives, 14 wounded at Ampara STF camp

"Seven people tragically lost their lives and fourteen people were injured when a large crowd of people forcefully entered the Kanjirankudah STF (Special Task Force of the Sri Lanka Police) camp south of Thirukkovil shortly after 17.00 on Wednesday" (9 October), a statement issued by the international Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLLM) issued on 10 October said.

The statement added as follows:

"A demonstration of an estimated 500-1000 people crowd outside the camp got out of control when the crowd broke through the main entrance and a barbed wire fence and entered the camp. According to the STF officer in command of the camp, the members of the crowd were throwing stones, burning tyres and shooting with firearms. The STF used teargas and fired rubber-bullets at the crowd and eventually fired at the people with live ammunition.

SLMM Monitors arrived at the camp before 20.00 and found three bodies inside the camp and one body 5 metres outside the camp's fences. SLMM findings indicate that these 4 people had lost their lives exactly where their bodies were found. After initial examination it was thought that one of the dead persons was a member of the LTTE, due to his clothing. However, now it is thought that this person was a civilian, as his clothes were only similar, but not the same as the LTTE cadres frequently wear. SLMM Monitors observed that most things that could burn on the outside of the camp were still on fire at that time and tyres were still burning inside the camp. Communications antenna and lights belonging to the camp were damaged and windows broken in houses inside the camp. One assault rifle was also found on the ground outside the camp. SLMM Monitors in Ampara district have confirmed that seven people from the crowd died during and after the attack on the STF camp. Furthermore, fourteen people are confirmed as injured and are in Hospital in the town of Kalmunai. According to a medical officer in Kalmunai Hospital seven of them have bullet wounds but all are expected to be discharged in 2-3 days. Today, unidentified members of the public have established some roadblocks with burning tyres in this area on the East Coast. The situation has remained very tense but so far without violent incidents. The Officer in Command of the STF camp has stated that there were LTTE members from the Rufus Kulam camp in the attacking crowd. SLMM has no evidence of this at this time and nothing indicates that the LTTE leadership knew of this attack beforehand.

"This is a tragic event and extremely sad loss of lives," says Major General Trond Furuhovde, Head of SLMM. "Because of an uncontrolled demonstration people are now grieving their

loved ones. During only one night, Hope and Reconciliation is turned into fear and uncertainty. This calls for the restraint of the people and courage to keep our will for peace alive through these difficult times. The actions of everyone now must show that we can make these losses bearable by trying to contribute what we can to peace and a better future. This is truly a tragedy, but it emphasises that not only the parties of the conflict, but each and every person in Sri Lanka is responsible for making a lasting peace a reality in this country." Due to these events, Head of SLMM will be in Ampara and Batticaloa districts on Friday and Saturday (11-12 October)."

3 killed in Trincomalee blast

Oct. 12 - Sri Lanka's eastern Trincomalee district was brought under curfew yesterday after three people were killed and 22 injured in a grenade explosion. The injured were taken to a hospital by boat because protesters had blocked roads with burning tires, tree trunks and cement blocks, police and witnesses said.

According to reports, the grenade exploded near the Trincomalee town in the village of Uppuveli, where a hartal (a general closure) was on to protest the October 9 police firing, which killed five persons in eastern Amparai district. Following the explosion, the curfew, which was in an administrative division of the district, was extended throughout Trincomalee.

Residents said there was considerable tension in Trincomalee between the Sinhalese and Tamil communities, but the curfew and the advent of security forces led to the violence abating as the day progressed.

The Defence Ministry said that there was a "sudden deterioration" in the security situation in which burning of tyres, congregations at junctions and roadsides were among the incidents.

The Ministry ordered the Army and the Navy to step in to assist the police. The Deputy Chief of Staff, Anton Wijendra has been given charge of co-ordinating all security issues.

The sudden turn of events during the past two days comes as a serious challenge to the ongoing ceasefire between the Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). In end-June, Tamil-Muslim clashes sent the east into a panic mode, but the tension were de-escalated following talks between the Sri Lanka Army and the Tigers.

Taking a serious view of the situation, the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) termed today's incident as violence unleashed against the Tamils by some lawless elements and "We strongly condemn this cowardly attack'," R. Sampanthan, Parliamentary leader of the TNA, said. Tamil Tigers spokesman Daya Master said the rebels have called for a day of mourning on Saturday 12 October in the Tamil-dominated north-east, an action that is likely to lead to more demonstrations. Normal life in Trincomalee district was paralysed today, with government offices, banks, business establishments and schools being closed for the day. Markets were closed as protesters burnt tyres to block traffic after Tamil organsiations called for a strike in many parts of eastern Sri Lanka - to protest the killings. The government imposed a curfew through Saturday morning and troops were ordered onto the streets to avoid any further incidents.

The Peace Process

It is understood that Norwegian officials involved in the peace process were working out details relating to the mandate and structure of a Joint Committee and a Joint Task Force to handle humanitarian and reconstruction activities. A Joint Committee represented by the military and LTTE is also to be set up with a view to reviewing existing High Security Zones (HSZs) in the north-east.

The government agreed to the setting up of the Joint Committee and the Joint Task Force at the first round of talks with the LTTE last month talks in Thailand. Work is being undertaken on a priority basis so as to enable these bodies to be in place before the two parties sit for the second round of talks in Thailand scheduled to begin on October 31. The third and the fourth rounds of talks will be held for four days each beginning December 2 and January 6 next year.

In the meantime, a group of leading peace and human rights activists in Sri Lanka, while welcoming the decisions taken at the first round of talks held last month in Thailand between the Government and the LTTE, have urged that the proposed Joint Task Force should reflect the diversity of the North and East and include representatives of civil society and should conduct its activities in an open, transparent and consultative manner. They also have requested the GoSL and the LTTE to enter into a separate Human Rights Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding on Human Rights.

In a statement issued on 23 September, the Peace Support Group (PSG) of Sri Lanka said as follows:

"The PSG welcomes the decisions taken at the first round of formal talks between the Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sattahip, Thailand, as a sound basis for future negotiations. We, in particular, welcome the sentiments expressed by the chief negotiators at the peace talks, Prof G.L.Peiris, leader of the Sri Lankan Government delegation and Dr. Anton Balasingham, leader of the LTTE delegation, that they are seriously committed to advancing the peace process on a step-by-step basis, but without losing sight of the final objective of a durable solution to the conflict. This is to be achieved by substantial autonomy and self-governance to meet the aspirations of the peoples of the North and East within a united Sri Lanka.

The decisions taken at the first round of talks, however, are limited in scope. They cannot be otherwise given the protracted and complex nature of the conflict. In this context, the proposal to set up a Joint Committee comprising representatives of the GoSL and LTTE aimed at consolidating the achievements of the Ceasefire Agreement (CFA) as well as addressing such matters as the High Security Zones is timely. Further, the proposal to establish a Joint Task Force for Humanitarian and Reconstruction activities aimed at benefiting all ethnic communities of the North and East provides the opportunity for restoring normalcy to the lives of the people in conflict areas.

While the above measures are essential pre-requisites in consolidating and advancing the peace process, we wish to highlight the following imperatives that need to be addressed in the forthcoming weeks.

Firstly, while the proposed Joint Task Force for Humanitarian and Reconstruction Activities is seen by both parties as an "expression of their willingness to work together towards the establishment of a provisional Administrative Structure for the North and East", we would like to reiterate that any of the above structures, no matter how informal, should be guided by the principles of human rights, pluralism, democracy and accountability. The Joint Task Force should reflect the diversity of the North and East and include representatives of civil society. It should also conduct its activities in an open transparent and consultative manner.

Secondly, the period spanning the conclusion of the first round and the scheduled fourth round of talks in early January

2003, should be utilized in working out a set of Guiding Principles or a Normative Frame of Reference for future negotiations on substantive and core issues. This should include such issues as the importance of democracy, the nature of the state, power-sharing and autonomy for the North and East, fundamental rights and freedoms. In this process we urge the setting up of a consultative mechanism comprising a broad section of civil society and political actors that would run parallel to the direct negotiations between the GoSL and the LTTE. We also urge that the two parties avail themselves of this mechanism throughout the negotiating process.

Thirdly, the PSG has always requested the GoSL and the LTTE to enter into a separate Human Rights Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding on Human Rights. Such an agreement or Memorandum of Understanding should commit both parties to abide by international standards of human rights and result in the setting up of a monitoring mechanism for human rights protection, that includes international representation.. Finally, we call on the GoSL and the LTTE to renounce the further use of land mines as a gesture of good faith and as a demonstration of their commitment to the speedy resettlement of internally displaced people and the restoration of normalcy in the North and East."

The signatories to the statement are: Sunilla Abeysekera , Sunil Bastian , Radhika Coomaraswamy , Sudanda Deshapriya , Rohan Edrisinha , Ketheshwaran Loganathan , Jehan Perera , Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu , Jeevan Thiagarajah , Joe William and Javid Yusuf.

PA support for peace talks

The main opposition Peoples Alliance has pledged that it would not scuttle or obstruct the peace talks between the government and the LTTE, but urged a final settlement within a year warning that an inordinate delay might lead to a bigger tragedy.

Former Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar, now a key advisor to President Chandrika Kumaratunga told a news conference on 27 September that the talks should not be allowed to drag on indefinitely on peripheral matters without addressing the core issues.

"We see no justification for protracted talks. After all, the problem is not a new one. Surely both parties must have identified the fundamentals relating to their stand by now. What is the use of maintaining a ceasefire for even five years if we can't work out a solution," Mr. Kadirgamar asked. Mr. Kadirgamar said the government should clearly spell out what it was prepared to offer and the LTTE should be equally clear on what it would settle for. "The people have a right to know where the two parties stand. We, as a party directly representing over three million voters are duty-bound to make their voice heard," he said.

Mr. Kadirgamar, sounding a positive note amidst confusion about where the PA stands, said the PA was extending its full support to the peace effort and was looking forward to the success of the talks. "True, we have made critical comments about certain aspects. But we do not mean to put any obstacle in the way. If we point out any shortcoming, it means we want it rectified and we don't want to obstruct the peace process in any way," he said. "After all, it was President Kumaratunga who made a genuine effort as a leader to reach a solution through negotiations. She is the creator of the peace vehicle. She does not want the vehicle to crash into some obstacle on the way though she no longer is at the wheel," Mr. Kadirgamar said.

"We will under no circumstances play spoiler," he said. "We will not wreck the peace process, we will only act as the watchdog and play a constructive role. If there are remarks against the process made by some members of the PA, it must be taken in the context of a politician saying something for a particular audience for political reasons. It does not reflect the PA policy," Mr. Kadirgamar said.

On the negative side, Mr. Kadirgamar said there was a growing suspicion in the south as the government had not taken the people into its confidence on what it was prepared or ready to offer. Referring to LTTE chief negotiator Anton Balasingham's reported statement that the PA had no proper policy on the peace issue, Mr. Kadirgamar said, "I would like to remind him it was the PA that began the Norwegian -facilitated negotiations and tried to adopt a new Constitution as a means of settling the issue. Our attempt was defeated and this defeat will stand out as a prominent black-mark in the Parliamentary history of the country."

Responding to a question on the LTTE statement that it was dropping its demand for a separate state, Mr. Kadirgamar expressed some reservations saying the LTTE was now speaking of self-rule without clearly explaining the parameters of it.

The Muslim Dimension

The Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) was "cautiously optimistic" that the aspirations of the Muslim community would be "rationally met" when a final settlement is reached through negotiations. Placing the emphasis on "power-sharing" rather than on territorial demarcation as a means to address the Muslim concerns, Rauff Hakeem, leader of the SLMC, downplayed a key Muslim demand for a separate administrative entity in eastern Sri Lanka.

"What I feel is that trying to jump to geographical definitions too fast is not going to contribute to bridge-building", Mr. Hakeem said, when he was asked at a press conference on 24 September about the status of an earlier Muslim demand for a separate administrative council for the island's Muslims.

A separate administrative unit, tentatively referred to as south-eastern council, was seen by the Muslims in the island as part of a larger solution to the decades-long ethnic conflict to safeguard their interests. This was against the backdrop of strained LTTE-Muslim relations during the past decade, especially after the Tigers ordered all Muslims in the north out in the early 1990s. Mr. Hakeem's present stance comes against two recent developments: the LTTE's announcement that it would settle for "regional autonomy and self-governance" and its recognition of Sri Lanka's north-east as homeland for the island's "Tamils and Muslims".

The negotiations, he said, should "work towards the end result". The key issue, he said, was to "avoid dominance".

Rauff Hakeem said the final structural arrangement to solve the North East conflict should have enough defences to avoid one side dominating the other and should evolve a healthy compromise on conflicting interests.

Mr. Hakeem said allowing one community to dominate law and order in the North and the East even at interim level would have a detrimental effect on the peace process. To avoid this, adequate attention should be paid to make sure there was a correct ethnic mix at all decision making levels.

Mr. Hakeem said the Muslim dimension of the ethnic issue, as proven in the recent riots in Valaichchenai and Mutur, could be explosive and therefore needed due recognition. However he maintained that, as the only member of the government peace delegation who had met LTTE Supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran, he was confident that the parties to the conflict could work out a solution.

Even as he was expressing such confidence, Rauf Hakeem reportedly met SLMC break away group MPs Ferial Ashraff, M.L.A.M. Hisbullah and Segu Izadeen in order to clear the air and clarify matters regarding the SLMC strategy at peace talks.

During the meeting, it is learnt, Minister Hakeem had explained to the breakaway group of MPs that he would take up contentious issues such as the unit of devolution for Muslims, at the most appropriate time with government and the LTTE interlocutors. The SLMC leader had intimated the three MPs that there was no need for them to entertain any doubts about him not taking these subjects at the preliminary round of talks in Thailand, as it was too premature to do so.

The meeting took place in the aftermath of comments made by Mrs. Ashraff stating that Minister Hakeem should have taken up contentious issues pertaining to the Muslim dimension at the first round of talks itself.However, other SLMC seniors feel that such comments do not augur well for calculated strategies of the SLMC to win the legitimate rights of the Muslims.

Visit by British MPs

Progress in peace talks will largely determine if Britain will lift the ban on the LTTE or not, said Mr.Gareth Thomas, British Member of Parliament, on 15 October after visiting Jaffna and Vanni areas accompanied by Mr.Robert Evans, Member of European Parliament.

Mr.Robert Evans and Mr.Gareth Thomas met Mr.S.P.Thamilchelvan Tuesday afternoon and had discussions for about one and a half hours, according to the LTTE sources.

The British MPs arrived in Jaffna yesterday and visited Vadamarachchy, Kaithadi and Chavakachchri. They met the Principal of Harley College, Mr. SriPathy in Point Pedro and had discussions with the representatives of the Students Union of Jaffna University. They also had discussions with Major General Anton Wijendra at the Palay army base.

Meeting local press in Vavuniya enroute toColombo, Mr. Evans said, "I was in Jaffna two years ago. The town has made significant progress toward normality. But we are very conscious of the need to move forward. There seems to be a lot of evidence of re-building and it is heartening to see the people not only are going about with their own lives but looking forward with optimism towards the future.

"We are very enthusiastic about the peace process and the prospects for the country settling down and moving forward. No one thinks it is going to be easy. Negotiations towards reaching a settlement will be difficult and will take time. But the mere fact that within a matter of months talks are taking place and more talks are planned is very encouraging to all people of Sri Lanka."

When asked about the meetings with the officials of the security forces and with the political head of the LTTE Mr. Evans said, "We discussed with both sides on issues related to landmines, recruitment policies of child soldiers, resettlement, and their commitment to the peace process. Although there are differences between the sides in some aspects, over all we are satisfied with the positive nature of responses."

Mr.Robert Evans said that they were impressed with the changes which had taken place in Colombo and Jaffna after the peace process started to move forward.

"I have noticed a markded decrease of the military presence and road blocks in Colombo. Situation is similar in Jaffna. We didn't feel in any way insecure or on the edge in Jaffna. We went out in the evening and it was fine. Equally in the Vanni, there was no show of military strength by the LTTE."

When asked about the fate of the Tamil asylum seekers in the European countries he said: "There are number of people, mainly Tamils from North and East seeking asylum. The UK government and the other European governments are trying to work out a common European Asylum Policy that will provide an opportunity and assistance for those wishing to return to Sri Lanka to resettle. But there will not be any forced repatriation. At present we are not accepting new asylum seekers from Sri Lanka because the situation is calm and we don't believe the current position warrants it."

Mr.Gareth Thomas said he joined this visit to see for himself the ground situation in the country in general and particularly in Vanni, the area controlled by the LTTE. "I wanted to see how the peace process is working and I am very much encouraged by the way things are going on here now. We hope the peace process will continue and the sense of peace and the sense of goodwill will deepen.

"One of the issues they have raised with me is the ban on the LTTE. The truth is the ban on the LTTE is not likely to be lifted until we see how the peace process unfolds. The reason I have come to Sri Lanka is because I have a large number of Tamil contituents, in some areas 10% of residents are Sri Lankans," he said.

World Bank support for peace

WASHINGTON, October 1, 2002—The World Bank has offered continuing support to Sri Lanka's deepening peace process in meetings this week between Finance Minister Kairshasp Nariman Choksy and senior officials from the institution.

"We commend all the people of Sri Lanka for their will and perseverance to restore peace," said Mieko Nishimizu, Vice President, South Asia Region of the World Bank. "We rejoice with you that the journey to peace has commenced. Sri Lanka has enjoyed high levels of human development and it is this reserve of skill and energy that will be so important in helping Sri Lanka's economy leap forward towards faster growth and faster job creation for all citizens."

The World Bank has responded to the prospects for peace in Sri Lanka by identifying resources that can be mobilized immediately. During the war, many bank-supported projects were designed with an island-wide focus but the conflict-affected areas were inaccessible to these development works. Now, US$ 15 million is available for these areas to support reconstruction activities there. In addition, a further U$$35 million has been identified in other existing projects where the money is no longer needed to support project goals. This, too, will become available for the reconstruction already beginning in Sri Lanka's war-torn northern areas, to support such key activities as rebuilding schools and clinics, restoring water supplies and helping returning families with their housing needs. This would be in addition to the on-going U$$27-million Bank-supported North East Irrigated Agriculture Project which helps rural communities in conflict areas rebuild their livelihoods.

The World Bank is working with Sri Lanka's other international development partners on a comprehensive needs assessment for the north and east and, in the longer term, the Bank's strategy for supporting Sri Lanka will focus on economic reform and development in the context of the peace process.

"It is vital that Sri Lanka pursue both its cherished peace process and economic reforms at the same time," said Peter Harrold, Country Director for Sri Lanka. "Peace alone will not deliver Sri Lanka to secure tomorrow. Some hard work and dif-

ficult choices in restructuring the economy will be needed to give shape to the peace in the form of hope for a productive future for all."

The Sri Lankan delegation welcomed the world Bank's commitment to further support and described recent progress in economic reform including the energy sector, finance, labour and welfare.

"We are resolved to reform the economy." Said Mr. Choksy. "More importantly, we are resolved to reform the economy in parallelism with the peace process. One avenue reinforces the other and we have a great opportunity now to lay the basis for the future of peace and economic prosperity in Sri Lanka."

UNHCR appeal for help to refugees

Geneva, Oct 11 - The United Nations refugee agency on Friday appealed for US$10 million to help Sri Lankan refugees return to their homes after two decades of civil war. "Sri Lankans are voting with their feet for peace and stability. Our aid programs will consolidate the gains made at the negotiating table by helping people to rebuild their communities and their lives," said Ruud Lubbers, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees. More than 180,000 Sri Lankans displaced within the country have returned home since February's cease-fire agreement, the agency says. Around 1,000 people also have returned from India, but there are still 64,000 Sri Lankan refugees in camps in India's southern Tamil Nadu province.

"The international community must meet the needs of the thousands of Sri Lankans already streaming home and the many more people who look ready to follow," Lubbers said. The money US$2 million for this year and US$8 million for next year would allow the agency to help up to 60,000 families, providing plastic tarpaulins, kitchen equipment, sleeping mats, soap and jerry cans, the agency said. UNHCR also wants to finance projects to improve access roads, water and sanitation, as well as health services and programs to generate income.

More than half the people who have returned to their homes so far have gone back to the Jaffna Peninsula, a region that was devastated during the war. "Water, sanitation, shelter and other infrastructure are in need of immediate rehabilitation in order to ensure the successful reintegration of the 95,000 recent returnees and those soon to follow," UNHCR said.

Attack on EPDP office

Oct 7 - The office of the EPDP led by Douglas Devananda, MP, in Delft - one of the Jaffna islets - was on October 6 night stormed by a large crowd of persons and set on fire with one EPDP cadre being taken by them as captive. One motor cycle and a landmaster vehicle had been set on fire and office furniture were ransacked. The EPDP has charged that the LTTE instigated and carried out the attack.

According to LTTE sources, an EPDP cadre earlier that day had assaulted a civilian who sustained cut injuries on his head. This incident allegedly provoked the civilians to smash up the EPDP office. One EPDP activist Sivachandran Satheeskumar alias Ameen was taken by the crows as captive. Other EPDP activists in the Delft are reportedly under the protection of the police. The victim in the earlier incident who reportedly sustained cut injuries K. Loganathan(46) was admitted to hospital for treatment.

Five other cadres of the EPDP escaped and sought refuge with the Sri Lankan police, and all six were handed over to the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) when its representatives arrived at the scene, the Uthayan said.

Another news report said that posters had been plastered in many parts of the Jaffna peninsula last week, advising EPDP cadres to leave the peninsula before November 1. Though they said the advice was from the people it was generally believed the LTTE was behind it. On Saturday 6 October around 7 in the evening, hundreds of persons surrounded the EPDP camp situated near the Assistant Government Agent office and attacked it. There were only six EPDP cadres in the camp at that time. They tried to escape by the rear entrance, but the people caught one of them named Ameen. He was dragged to the Multipurpose Cooperative Store and kept tied to a pillar. Others took refuge with the police, which had opened up a police station, a fortnight ago.

Meanwhile, the EPDP in a statement alleged that on the night of 6 October, LTTE cadres in civilian attire attacked the EPDP office on Delft Island. The attack was carried out in the same fashion as the recent attacks on Army check points in Point Pedro and police barriers in Valaichchenai, it said.

The statement further said: "Some EPDP members were cut with knives by LTTE cadres. One EPDP member who was injured has been abducted by the LTTE. Kannan of the LTTE's Delft camp prevented the SL police from intervening in the incident.

"The incident commenced with a few drunken men armed with knives, instigated by the LTTE, appearing in front of the EPDP office and using obscene language. When EPDP members who were in the office attempted to leave the office, they were attacked with knives. One EPDP member, Ameen, received cut injuries.

"The EPDP members rushed to the nearby building where the SL police was in the process of establishing a police post and complained to the police officers there. Ameen was abducted in the presence of the police officers. LTTE's Kannan appeared on the scene and threatened the police and prevented them from taking any action. At that time, another larger group of LTTE cadres appeared on the scene.

"The SL police had not even settled down in Delft to be able to help anyone. It was therefore not surprising that the police who were few in numbers and poorly armed could not react. The LTTE thereupon set fire to a farm tractor, a motor cycle and personal belongings of EPDP members.

"The incident was immediately reported to the Assistant Superintendent of Police in Kayts. Action is being taken to report the matter to the Defence Ministry as well as to the SLMM. The people of Delft are indignant that the peace which existed in Delft Island for more than a decade has been disturbed by permitting the LTTE to enter the island under the cover of a peace agreement.

"The people of this country could not have forgotten the recent attacks on Karaveddy Pradeshiya Sabha office, the attacks in Point Pedro and Valaichchenai, the assault on school principal Sripathy and the abduction of security forces personnel in Trincomalee. The inability of the government and SLMM to react to these incidents and their inability to secure the release of the six abducted soldiers has emboldened the LTTE to undertake this attack on the EPDP office.

"This incident is the latest in the series of the LTTE's attempts to destroy democracy and pluralism and establish fascist rule in the North -East. What the LTTE could not achieve through war, it was now attempting to achieve through the cease-fire agreement."

Exchange of POWs

The much expected exchange prisoners of war between the government and the LTTE took place on 28 September Omanthai, on the southern border of the Vanni region.

The Tigers freed seven POWs and the GOSL released thirteen LTTE troopers in exchange. The commanders of the LTTE's Northern and Western Front Forces and the commander of its artillery division met the commanders of the Sri Lanka army and navy at a special ceremony for the POW exchange Saturday around 11.30 a.m. Col. Jeyam, the commander of the LTTE's Western Front Forces and Col. Theepan, the commander of the LTTE's Northern Front Forces received the released Tigers.

Col. Bhanu, the commander of the LTTE's artillery division received "Kennedy", a trooper who was trapped during a commando raid on the sole airstrip of the Sri Lanka army's sprawling Palaly base in Jaffna in 1994. The commander of the Sri Lanka Navy Daya Sandagiri received Captain Ajith Boyagoda whose wife, mother and brothers were present for the tearful reunion.

Addressing the ceremony, Mr. Thangan, a senior official of the political division of the Liberation Tigers said Mr. Velupillai Pirapakaran has arranged the release of several batches of POWs from time to time purely on humanitarian grounds. "The reunion of these families gives us great pleasure for we cherish family values. We consider this occasion as another peace dividend and hope that similar gestures of goodwill would form the foundation of confidence building, a vital element in the peace process," Mr. Thangan said. "While expressing our sense of satisfaction in the reunion of these families, we expect that similar steps be initiated for the release and reunion of several hundreds of Tamil youth languishing in Sri Lankan prison," he said.

Wishing the released Sri Lankan armed forces personnel, the Secretary to the Ministry of Defence, Mr. Austin Fernando said, "May they, like President Mandela, who spent 27 years on Robin Island in solitary confinement and transcended hate and bitterness for his oppressors, put behind them the past and work with us towards a happier and better future," adding "The prisoner release also signifies the beginning of a partnership in which we need to co-operate closely on many matters, including demining, the resettlement of IDPs, the resumption of agriculture and other forms of livelihood in development, creation of job opportunities, social and cultural renaissance."

"Participation of the LTTE and the GOSL representatives too endorses the ability to work together as partners in progress. It shows togetherness, which was lacking for twenty years," he said. .

More than 70 international and local media persons covered the ceremony. The Secretary to Sri Lanka's Ministry of Interior, the Government Agent for Vavuniya and the head of delegation of the ICRC were also present at the POW exchange. ●

Social acceptance is key to sustainable peace process

Jehan Perera

Political will and social acceptance are the two pillars of any process of national reformation. There has been strong criticism of the peace process by the opposition. The balance of forces in Parliament has reduced the scope for constitutional reform that would require a two-thirds majority. Despite these handicaps the government has been unswerving in its conduct of the peace process. It is delivering on the promises it made, both those made to the electorate in December 2001 in its election campaign and those made in the cease-fire agreement it signed with the LTTE in February 2002.

The lesson from the past ten months since the election of the new government is that political will, when combined with state power, can make drastic changes to a situation. Not even a year ago the existence of a situation of cease-fire like the present one was unimaginable. Overcoming the vested interests of arms dealers and the military seemed almost impossible. But political will has made the difference. Even though the new government did not have a steamroller majority, it gave clear orders to the bureaucratic and military machinery of the state that have been obeyed.

Apart from political will, the other pillar of national reformation is social acceptance. Political will by itself is not enough. There needs to be social acceptance for national reformation to take place. At the very least a significant majority of people must implicitly accept the changes that are taking place. They may not openly show this support, such as by spilling out onto the streets in large numbers and actively demonstrating their backing for the government, but in their hearts believe that the changes are necessary.

The need for social acceptance in addition to political will can be seen in the events of July 1987 when the Indo-Lanka Peace Accord was signed. President J. R. Jayewardene demonstrated strong political will in signing the Accord with the Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. Not only did he sign the Accord, he also proceeded to implement it in the face of opposition from a wide spectrum of public and political opinion, including opposition from his own party members. Curfew had to be declared the day that Parliament met to pass the 13th Amendment to the constitution that sought to implement the Indo Lanka Accord. There was political will but no social acceptance.

According to Mr. W. T. J. S. Kaviratne, President of the Southern Province United Media Association, there was chaos in the south of the country with the announcement of the signing of the Accord. School children were taken to the streets and government buildings were burnt. The Hikkaduwa public bus stand was set on fire along with buses. Even private vehicles were attacked and a brand new hearse was consigned to the flames though minus its occupants.

Difference today

Today, by way of contrast the same areas of the south that once saw political violence and active social protest against an effort to end the ethnic conflict through compromise and negotiations are quiet. By the side of the Karandeniya railway station is the figure of a very large (and ungainly) white dove. On its neck is hung a placard saying "Peace to the country." Mr. Kavira-

tne said this dove had made a journey to Jaffna aboard a pick-up truck as part of a peace visit by a group of villagers. It continued to be displayed by the railway station as symbol of the people's desire for peace.

Further down the road there were banners adorning the roadside and the sound of a speech broadcast by loudspeaker. The site was an exhibition of photographs illustrating the costs of the war. The exhibition attracted over 5,000 school children from five schools in the vicinity over a three-day period in addition to other visitors. Among these others were 50 young novice Buddhist monks who were there at the closing of the exhibition. Their superior bemoaned the poverty of his pirivena and said his main pre-occupation was to find sources of income to feed and house the novice monks. But he added that they had a thirst for knowledge about the modern developments in which they wished to participate as informed participants.

The concluding ceremony was attended by a government minister, P. Chandraskeran. But this did not mean that the exhibition was organised for a partisan purpose. It had been organised by a bipartisan team of young UNP and PA local government politicians with support from the National Peace Council. In Karandeniya, there was a demonstration of grassroots level political bipartisanship and a strong bond of cooperation with civil society with regard to the peace process that is evading their counterparts at higher levels.

President of the Southern Province media association, Mr. Kaviratne, offered an explanation for the difference between the attempted peace process of 1987 and the present one. A decade and a half of war had seen several hundreds of coffins coming home to this part of the Southern Province. The people are aware that without the present peace process several more coffins would have been coming home over the past ten months. Through their direct encounters with death and with returning soldiers who have their stories to tell, there is no more faith left in those who advocate a military solution.

Main outcomes

A second reason for the difference in the two peace processes is that President J. R. Jayewardene sprang the Indo Lanka Peace Accord of 1987 as a surprise upon an agitated nation. Many even in his government and the Cabinet were not aware of the impending Accord. Further the government had been in power for ten years and had lost much of its popularity. By way of contrast, in the case of the present peace process the people were forewarned about what to expect when they voted for Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and his government. The UNP's election manifesto made it clear that it would enter into a cease-fire with the LTTE and would thereafter establish an interim administration for the north and east. There have been no real surprises for the people, except that the peace process has been able to proceed so smoothly.

There is also a third reason for the dramatic difference in the social acceptance between the abortive peace process of 1987 and that of the present. The Indo Lanka Accord brought with it over 50,000 Indian troops which sent off alarm bells among the masses of the people. This was its main outcome at the outset and it seemed, to them, to be a replay of ancient history when invasions from India frequently ravaged Sri Lanka. By way of contrast, the present peace process has brought an end to war as its main outcome. The difference in the main outcome of the two peace processes is what is keeping the people supportive of the present one.

The cessation of war and its terror and destruction is an enormous boon to the people. The success of the ceasefire by itself has won social acceptance for the peace process. The danger point will be if and when the cease-fire is threatened. The government's failure at this time to consciously work civil society to promote social acceptance of the peace process could turn out to be a costly mistake at that stage. It was observable that there was no mention of a role for civil society in the statements of the parties at the Thailand talks. But it can be taken for granted that the sustenance of peace cannot be accomplished by the conflicting parties only, while the general population is expected to remain as passive observers.

The peace process needs to be founded on social acceptance as much as on political will. The government and LTTE need to recognise that a greater involvement of civil society would provide a broader base on which the peace process can be built. The LTTE's decision to establish a peace secretariat of its own is positive in this regard. It is important that this peace secretariat should make a special effort to liaise with civil society and not simply be there for cosmetic purposes.

It would also be in the interests of the sustainability of the peace process that the present government, with its pro-business instincts, should overcome its instinctive distrust of collaboration with social reformist sections of civil society. While the government has set up its own peace secretariat it is not actively negotiating with civil society in taking forward its educational work. This is a problem that both the government and LTTE seem to share with each other though in different degrees. There is a need for a government-LTTE-civil society partnership that takes the reality of the complexities of the peace process to the grassroots. ●

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Anti-conversion Ordinance and Article 25

Valson Thampu

The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Jayalalithaa, is doing her best to espouse the Hindutva cause. It must be said to her credit that whatever she does, she does in style. So she has, in respect of the anti-conversion ordinance too. Understandably, the Sangh circles are elated; especially the BJP president Venkaiah Naidu.

But, unfortunately for them, an overwhelming majority of the people still remain sensible and fair, as the early media responses amply prove. They are perplexed and ask if there is any need at all to come up with an ordinance against conversion at the present time.

What are the ground realities in respect of conversion?

The Sangh mouthpieces caricature and denounce conversions as a calculated strategy on the part of Muslims and Christians to wipe out Hinduism from the land of its birth. They allege, further, that large-scale mass conversions are taking place and that every conversion is effected by "force, fraud or inducement". The evidence by which this conclusion is arrived at is kept a closely guarded secret, though.

There is hardly any credible explanation, besides, for the following facts. For all the tens and thousands of conversions allegedly effected by unfair means by Muslims and Christians, the demographic progression still remains in favour of Hindus, who comprise 82 per cent of the population. As a matter of fact, the Christian community has, in the last four decades (1971-2001), shown a steady demographic decline. Christians were 2.6 per cent of the Indian population in 1971. They dwindled to 2.43 per cent in 1981 and to 2.34 per cent in 1991.

According to Census 2001, Christians comprise only 2.18 per cent of the population of India. This puts in perspective the merit of the allegation that large-scale conversions by Christians endanger the very survival of Hinduism in India.

How well-founded is the allegation that all conversions are effected by 'force, fraud or inducement'? This question was addressed ably by Justice Wadhwa Commission Report that puts together the findings in respect of the assassination of Graham Staines and his two sons, Philip and Timothy. Orissa was the first State in India to have formulated what is ironically named ``Freedom of Religion Act (1967)''; an example that was followed, the very next year, by Madhya Pradesh. The report records that there were 10 conversions-related complaints in Orissa since 1994, as per the records made available to the Commission of Inquiry. None has resulted in any conviction. To the best of our knowledge, no *bona fide* case of conversion by unfair means has been proved or punished anywhere in this country so far.

What politicians like Ms. Jayalalithaa do not know is that conversion is the last resort for a human being. We know how upset we feel when even a small habit of ours is disturbed. If so, it is easy to see how difficult it is for a human being to be uprooted from his familiar religious terrain and transplanted in a different spiritual soil.

Why do people convert in spite of this? The fact of the matter is that the Dalits/SCs and STs of this country are trapped in such unimaginable humiliation and degradation that they are 'forced' to flee from their familiar home in search of freedom and dignity. If 'force' plays a role in conversions, it is mostly force of this kind and it is generated not by those who 'propagate' their faiths, but by the oppressive and inhuman caste system. As of today, a Dalit who converts, say to Christianity, stands to lose a great deal in terms of statutory benefits like reservation. Almost invariably, the converts are ostracised and disowned by their people. Several live with or flee from hostile social environments. Conversion rarely brings any direct economic relief into their lives. Any improvement in the socio-economic status of the converts results, as the Wadhwa Commission Report points out in respect of the converts in Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar (Orissa), from a reformation in their lifestyles and religious practices. The converts to Christianity, the Report notes, give up drinking and ritual sacrifices. The money thus saved leads to an improvement in quality of life.

Ordinances like what Ms. Jayalalithaa has now crafted serve only to raise the communal temperatures in our country and fuel the fire of intolerance. Those who have read the Wadhwa Commission Report sensitively could not have missed the subtle connection it establishes, albeit implicitly, between the Orissa Freedom of Religion Act of 1967 and the murder of Graham Staines. Till this legislative measure was put in place, the resentment against missionary work in general and conversion in particular had only a subjective and incoherent basis.

The moment matters of conscience like conversion are legislated upon from an obstructionist standpoint, this allergy acquires an air of objectivity and legitimacy. With this, the issue of conversion moves from the zone of resentment to that of righteous indignation. Those who practise and propagate their faith, as sanctioned under Article 25 of the Constitution, are seen thereafter as anti-social and anti-national elements. It becomes a religious duty, so to speak, to limit or liquidate them. Article 25 of the Constitution grants to every Indian citizen the "right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion." In interpreting the scope of this key provision, due emphasis must fall on the word, `freely'. What this implies is obvious from `Explanation 1' incorporated into this section of the Constitution. It reads, "The wearing and carrying of kirpans shall be deemed to be included in the profession of the Sikh religion". To 'freely' profess one's faith is, thus, to profess it in fidelity to its essential genius and uniqueness.

Anyone who knows the biblical faith would readily agree that the duty to preach and propagate the faith is at least as integral to Christianity as sword is to Sikhism. "Preach the gospel in season and out of season," is the instruction that the Bible gives to its followers. Jesus called the disciples to send them out with the Good News. No one can be a practitioner of the way of Christ without "wearing and carrying" the Gospel, as the Sikhs are to do in respect of kirpans.

To insist that Christians should practice their faith without the freedom to propagate it is to say, in effect, that they are free to profess their faith not 'freely' but only as dictated by Hindus who comprise the brute majority. Because Hinduism is not a propagating faith, in spite of the VHP no other faith, in exercising the freedom to 'freely' profess their faith shall be free to 'propagate' their religion. If they do, it will violate the freedom of the Hindus to 'freely' profess their faith. This is the judicial wisdom obtained, as of today. This makes a mockery of Article 25 of the Constitution.

That being the case it is not clear as to how the Hon'ble judges of the Supreme Court, in Stanislaus vs. the State of Madhya Pradesh could come to the conclusion that the right to propagate does not imply the right to convert. Between propagation and conversion, there exists a relationship of cause and effect. Propagation is the cause and conversion the effect. To say that a person can have recourse to the cause but should not be free to bring about its effect is to take a curious position, to say the least.

The writer is a peace activist (The Hindu)

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Cohabitation destined to die?

Keith Noyahr

The cohabitation arrangement between the UNF government and President Chandrika Kumaratunga during the past ten months has been a shaky one that now appears doomed to die.

But, as to the type of death and the fallout therefrom we can never be certain of at this juncture, except to surmise by suggesting possible scenarios.

Before we get to the fag end of this tale it might be prudent to retrace events that have led to this unfortunate situation.

At the outset it must be said that a majority of the people had expressly willed that the country be governed by the Executive President from the People's Alliance and a UNF government. This mandate came despite repeated declarations by President Kumaratunga in the run-up to the December 5 general elections that she could not work with a UNF government. Mrs. Kumaratunga even threatened to appoint the Prime Minister of her choice but later settled for Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe.

A UNF victory with a sitting president from the PA could be interpreted in many ways.

One such interpretation is that the electorate wanted a two-party government after earlier attempts at a national government failed. This was with the sole intention of settling the ethnic conflict through a bi-partisan approach by the two major parties.

A second interpretation is the electorate had enough of the PA governance and wanted the UNF voted in while having no choice last December over the removal of the President until the next presidential polls due in 2005.

While one cannot ignore the fact that President Kumaratunga was directly elected by the people, it must be said the UNF received a clear mandate to govern the country according to its enunciated policies. As I have said earlier in these columns the latest mandate should have the greatest weight given that the opinion of the voters could change over time.

At the very outset of the cohabitation arrrangement, the President appeared to block the government initially by objecting to a minister being sworn in for a certain portfolio. The Prime Minister was ready to compromise by deferring the appointment of Mr. S. B. Dissanayake as the Samurdhi Minister until his name was cleared of the allegations levelled at him.

She then tried to retain the Defence portfolio but later agreed to part with it after discussions with senior members of the UNF, her own legal advisers and the four service chiefs.

After initial hiccups, the cohabitation arrangement appeared to be on track and the President did not object to the government reciprocating an unofficial cease-fire declared by the LTTE on December 24.

On January 11, President Kumaratunga said she extends full support to the peace initiative.

Even the more structured cease-fire agreement signed by LTTE Leader Velupillai Prabhakaran, before it was shown to her, was not vehemently objected to by the President who however raised concerns on national security issues.

On March 1, President Kumaratunga critiqued it saying, "The present agreement does not include any indication, let alone a commitment, that the LTTE agrees to come to the negotiating table and talk of the essential and substantive issues. This gives me reason for concern."

The peace process continued to move at a rapid pace until it suddenly slowed down with the LTTE making various demands before it agreed to set dates for the peace talks.

This was despite Prime Minister Wickremesinghe announcing on April 15 that talks were likely to begin in June.

But that was not to be for a number of reasons including the chief negotiator Dr. Anton Balasingham of the LTTE evading the Norwegian facilitators and virtually becoming "non-contactable" failing to even return calls.

In April the President tried to caution New Delhi regarding the UNF undertaken peace process. New Delhi was not impressed. She also alleged the UNP was continuously harassing her party supporters. But, during a lecture she gave in New Delhi President Kumaratunga had an enlightened and progressive view on ethnic reconciliation. The UNF government however got really jittery when it realised that it was not all that certain of LTTE's commitment to the peaceful resolution of the conflict within a united Sri Lanka. It was also unsure of the People's Alliance support to the government for the peace process. The power of the president to dissolve parliament even as it was speculated that she was considering a prorogation as an interim measure disturbed the government.

It was then that UNF ministers began to consider setting in motion an impeachment process to stall a possible dissolution of parliament. To this end allegations on the purchase of high security vehicles by the presidential secretariat and the "rubber deal" were made. In the same breath, the ministers alleged the President's handbag brought to cabinet resembled the one that had an in-built spy video camera.

This provoked the President who

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later alleged that Minister Ravi Karunanayake had said that she brought bombs to the cabinet which was denied by the minister and the Prime Minister. She was clearly playing to the gallery to win the sympathy of the masses as she does now and again by twisting and turning statements.

An exchange of lengthy letters between the President and Prime Minister over the vehicle deal and the statement made by Mr. Karunanyake in cabinet took place until the run- up to Mr. Wickremesinghe's visit to Washington.

Even on the day the premier was meeting the US President George Bush, the President fearing that Mr. Wickremesinghe and his government will get undue mileage, sent a thundering letter to him with copies to the press.

Angered by the vehicle deal and the handbag issue President Kumaratunga went on the rampage in Polonnaruwa attacking several ministers including Karunanyake, Rajitha Senaratne, S.B. Dissanayake and the head of the vehicle probe team K.N. Choksy whom she mimicked.

In a veiled attempt to downplay the seriousness of the latter issue, she later said she should be given the best actor's award for continuing to keep her cool despite the provocations made by the UNF government.

She gave the government media an opportunity to repeatedly telecast this episode ending up cutting a sorry figure.

Knowing that the government LTTE talks were being delayed, the President challenged the Prime Minister on his statement that dates were not the important thing and demanded that talks begin immediately.

When dates for talks were finally announced, President Kumaratunga who did not initially object to the lifting of the ban on the LTTE, suddenly joined the bandwagon to criticise the move despite the government's prior announcement that the LTTE would be de-proscribed 10 days prior to the talks.

Her consistent insistence that the government discuss core issues before taking up the interim administration with the LTTE however should be treated as constructive criticism given the inherent fear that the LTTE might ask for the sun and the moon after the interim administration is set up.

However, the whole outlook to the peace process began to change positively after the LTTE declaration at Sattahip, Thailand that it was not interested in a separate state. Dr. Balsasingham in a briefing for the local media said the LTTE was ready to accept autonomy in a "united Sri Lanka."

In this backdrop President Kumaratunga made her infamous speech at Pilimatalawe days after a successful completion of Round I of the peace talks. Mrs. Kumaratunga said she was no kitten and was ready to take 500 others with her if an attempt was made on her life.

In spite of all the hard time the UNF ministers gave her Ranil Wickremesinghe has been rather tolerant and wanted to continue a working arrangement with President Kumaratunga.

The last nail in the "cohabitation coffin" however was driven by the President in Anuradhapura when she alleged by innuendo that the Prime Minister had sought a bribe of Rs. 25000/= through a middleman to admit her son to Royal College.

The first question that comes to one's mind is why did the President

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take so long to make such a serious allegation?

Surely, will anyone, particularly a rival party politician try taking a bribe from the daughter of two prime ministers?

President Kumaratunga is famous for making bribery allegations against others. Remember, how she said a judge of the Supreme Court had taken a bribe and when the highest court asked her to name the judge she backed out. There was another famous bribery allegation she made against a business conglomerate many years ago. But that allegation died a natural death. It beats me to find out that the person holding the highest office in the land has made so many allegations on bribery but never ventured to approach the appropriate agency, the Bribery Department, to have these allegations investigated and have the offenders punished.

The President has also been in the habit of denying the serious statements she makes now and again. She did it with the allegation she made against Wickremesinghe. Mrs. Kumratunga also did likewise when the JVP questioned her on the statement made down South, during the first round of peace talks, on the lines that she does not trust the JVP who are also terrorists like the LTTE.

Like Former President Ranasinghe Premadasa, President Kumaratunga tends to hit below the belt the media, particularly Wijeya Newspapers Ltd., often referring to the group as Ranil's uncle's newspapers.

But, unlike Mr. Premadasa who always stood by his statements, including the famous speech ordering the Indian troops out of Sri Lanka, Mrs. Kumaratunga says many things and then denies she said them.

One of the allegations cited in the impeachment motion against President Premadasa was that (judging by his speeches and actions) he was out of his mind and therefore could not hold office. In fact this is one of the impeachable offences.

Though the UNP must be studying the President's speeches with a fine comb in this respect, some say there is method in her madness as her remarks have always been meant for the gallery for calculated reasons.

After the Anuradhapura allegations, her spokesman Harim Peiris said on Wednesday that "As far as President Kumaratunga was concerned, there is no crisis in cohabitation."

This clearly was an attempt at damage control or undoing what was done by the President hours before the Cabinet was to meet to decide the fate of the cohabitation arrangement.

Her spokesman however clearly said the 19th Amendment was the only obstacle to the cohabitation arrangement. When one party feels that its members are about to dump the group and join the adversary who is scheming to attract these would-be dissidents, ill feelings are bound to crop up. But, then the question is how else could the government ensure the peace process could be carried on to its logical conclusion with threats of parliamentary dissolution and no assurance of opposition support.

The silver lining in this cloudy cohabitation arrangement is the suggestion by the Prime Minister to accept the President's nominee as an observer at the peace talks to which the President appears agreeable.

(Daily Mirror, 5.10.2002)

The Case of the Attack on Hartley College Principal

On September 21, the Principal of Hartley College, Point Pedro in the northern Jaffna peninsula, was beaten by a gang that abducted him from his home in a jeep and dumped him at a nearby cemetery. The Principal was hospitalised for treatment of the injuries he suffered. The incident had been brought to the notice of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission to probe if there was any LTTE involvement.

The background to this attack is related to the demonstration that was organised in on 2 September in attempt to storm the the Sri Lanka Army's 524 Brigade Headquarters in Point Pedro.

On 1 September, the TamilNet, generally perceived as a website projecting the LTTE's standpoint, reported: "The Vadamaradchi People's Movement (VPM) Sunday announced that a mass picketing campaign blocking three supply routes to the Sri Lanka Army's 524 Brigade Headquarters in Point Pedro town would be launched Monday demanding the withdrawal of armed forces from areas encompassing court house, post office, schools, rest house, places of worship and several civilian homes.... Students and teachers attend classes with fear going through the army checkpoints located around Hartley College and Vadamarachi Methodist Girls College, the sources said. The presence of the army has become a stumbling block for the restoration of normalcy in Point Pedro area, residents have complained to the Vadamaradchi People's Movement. Hence the VPM has organised a picketing campaign to exert pressure on the army to withdraw from the area, a spokesman for the organisation said."

On 2 September, TamilNet reporting under the heading, 'Jaffna students storm SLA positions' described an account of the demonstration that took place on that day:: "Over two thousand protesting Tamil students Monday forced their way into Sri Lanka Army positions and camps in Point Pedro in the northern Jaffna peninsula, destroying barriers, sentry points and checkpoints. Students demanding the withdrawal of troops from public places also blocked the main entrance of the SLA's 52-4 Brigade headquarters. Troops fired tear gars and live rounds and assaulted students, journalists and local officials of the Liberation Tigers' political wing who intervened. The demonstration by thousands of students had been organised in protest against the Sri Lanka military's closure of several roads which lead to schools and public offices in Point Pedro town. Vehicular traffic and public movement commenced immediately Monday through all roads reopened by students, sources said.... According to the TamilNet correspondent at the demonstration, more than two thousand students marched through Sivankoviladi area on the Jaffna-Point Pedro road around 10.30 and blocked the main entrance of 524 Brigade headquarters for about fifteen minutes. Thereafter they went in procession through Oodai veethi to College road, which leads to Hartley College and Methodist Girls College forcibly breaking all road barriers, sentries, camps and checkpoints of the SLA. Soldiers manning those points withdrew on seeing the enraged students who advanced towards their positions. Later students were seen setting fire to destroyed road barriers, sentries, checkpoints and camps of the SLA. Students were demolishing civilian buildings occupied by soldiers. At that stage school principals came to scene and took steps to pacify students from advancing further to towards army camps. But students did not respond to their advice. Thereafter students started throwing stones at soldiers who were seen remaining in their positions. SLA soldiers then fired with automatic weapons and also fired tear gas to disperse angry students before assaulting some demonstrators. Two officials of the Liberation Tigers' political wing, Mr. Illakian and Mr. Dennie, rushed to the scene on hearing of the clashes. The soldiers also assaulted the LTTE activists when they attempted to intervene to control the situation. Students thereafter started withdrawing from the scene."

The following is an abridged account from Report No. 15 of the University Teachers for Human Rights (Jaffna) relating to the assault on the Principal on 22 September:

Army Brigade 524 was originally occupying a section of Hartley College. Under the terms of the MoU the Army had to vacate the school premises, while the LTTE was applying pressure on the Army to move out of Pt. Pedro altogether. The Army relocated in several houses and disused government buildings alongside the school and kept the old sentry points for its security. These were manned casually. A short stretch of the coast road was blocked. Students and staff of the school were allowed free movement along College Road. But parents and visitors had to surrender their identity card at the checkpoint and enter their name in the visitors' book.

The attack on the morning of 2nd September was '100%' organised by the LTTE according to local sources. Associations of transporters were ordered to send given numbers of vehicles to various schools in Vadamaratchy to transport the students to Pt. Pedro.

What happened at Hartley College itself reveals important aspects of the organisation behind the event. Many students were unaware of what was going on. During the third period they saw students filing out of classrooms and followed in confusion. They noticed a number of outsiders in the school premises wearing school uniform. Under the direction of these outsiders the school prefects marched the students on to the road and then past the sentry point to join the main body of demonstrators.

The organisers ensured that no student remained in school. Students who attempted to leave with their bag and bicycle were made to leave them behind. The youngest students from Hartley forced to join the 'demonstration' were 11 years old. from grade six, the lowest class in school.

The role of the school authorities and staff appears to have been passive. The Principal of Hartley College told the Sunday Island (8.9.02) that they had allowed the students to leave the premises for the demonstration as they had done before, not knowing that it would turn violent this time. He also said that he had kept back at home that day his daughter at Methodist Girls' School nearby. This suggests that he knew in advance and had no choice.

The LTTE had also compelled members of the fishermen's and traders' associations to be at hand. Some agent provocateurs had also come with cans of fuel. The action started half an hour after the students at Hartley were brought out. While a section of the crowd threw stones at the Army, the school children who were wedged into the crowd were carried along as it surged forward.

The soldiers left the sentry points and withdrew without firing back. These sheds were set on fire by those coming behind. The identity cards were carefully spared. Along College Road, the mob entered the house of former MP Jeyakody that was used by the Army and smashed belongings, including a television set. It was when the mob got too threateningly close that the Army reacted by firing into the air and also launching canisters of tear gas. A girl from Methodist Girls' School who

collapsed with breathing difficulties due to tear gas was evacuated by ambulance.

Hartley lay within the Army's security zone and when the Army began firing into the air, the children ran into the school in panic. Finding soldiers also in the school they scattered wherever there was some prospect of getting into the neighbouring houses. Finding their way blocked by bladed wire defences installed earlier by the Army, they looked for places to climb a pole and jump over. (Those who went later to collect their belongings found army sentries around.) Many of the children broke down crying when they met their parents who rushed there on hearing the shooting.

Sivajilingam, MP, was seen cautiously pleading with the organisers to go easy and also trying to calm the security forces. Shoes and slippers left behind by the fleeing crowd were later collected and piled in neighbouring houses. After things eased off, 'fierce looking' army commandos with black scarves were seen guarding the approaches. The next day boards came up in Tamil with the warning that those entering without permission will be shot. Had not the Army acted with restraint, a march on an army camp of this nature could hardly have ended with zero casualties. The demonstration fizzled out for two reasons. One was that there was no bloodshed. The other is that the LTTE's 'Director of Student Affairs', Ilakkian, was prominently seen at the 'people's protest'.

In fact Ilakkian was photographed by reporters covering the demonstration and his picture appeared in the next day's Valampuri. The LTTE also called a hartal in Pt.Pedro the next day as a result of Ilakkian supposedly having sustained an injury in a brush with the Army.

According to well-placed sources in Jaffna, the LTTE leadership was angry and embarrassed when Ilakkian was pictorially shown exercising his office as 'Director of Student Affairs' on the infamous occasion that was supposedly a spontaneous people's protest. He was, we reliably understand, given a scolding for his tactlessness and asked to call it off....

The truth is that far from being supportive, the people in Jaffna were horrified with the way the LTTE used their children. Also when a meeting of old boys, parents and teachers of Hartley was called to discuss the reopening, several parents were afraid to go. They feared that in the heat of the moment they might be moved to express themselves frankly on the LTTE's conduct!

Attack on the Principal

Traditionally the Principal of Hartley College, Pt. Pedro has been among the leading citizens of Jaffna and a commanding figure in the Principals' Association. About April, after the LTTE returned to Jaffna, some LTTE men tried to remove the video cassette from a rival group that was filming a school function at Hartley. The Principal intervened and ordered the cassette to be returned asking, "Who is conducting this function, you or the school?" Sripathy also resisted the LTTE taking children out as they pleased and insisted on letters of consent from the parents when he could.

Following the recent incident above, Sripathy was quoted in the media praising the restraint shown by the Army and made a transparently implied criticism of the LTTE at the school assembly. He criticised the Press for reporting what happened on the occasion as a demonstration by the students, adding that they should check their facts correctly. He also said that there are proper ways of protesting for what is right, but endangering the lives of children by getting them to invade an army camp is utterly irresponsible. In these sentiments the parents were fully behind the Principal.

Sripathy's house was in a lane off a cross-road linking VM Road and College Road, terminating to the north at the boundary of his school, where there was an army guard point less than 75 yards from his home. On the evening of Friday, 20th September, a youth unknown in those parts came close to Sripathy's home and inquired for the Principal's house from some masons working nearby. On being shown the 'Hartley' Principal's house, he went away. About 9.30 PM the next day, a group of 15 to 20 young men came to his place in a van and a motor cycle and called him out. There was then in the house his nephew with five other young men on holiday. Sripathy went out with one young man. It was a day after full moon and quite bright. The newcomers started attacking Sripathy and the young man ran into the next house.

Sripathy received four severe blows on his head with wooden objects, and his lip cracked when he was struck on the face with a hand. The newcomers seemed taken aback when blood started pouring out of his nose and drenched his white verti. Sripathy ran into his house and barred the door. Unable to break down a good old fashioned door, two of the thugs made their way in through the roof, and opened the door. Four others then came in to take Sripathy out. Sripathy went out without resistance and signalled the males in his house not to resist. Sripathy was clumsily blindfolded, and just two persons took him with them on the motor cycle along VM Road, Thambasiddy Road and Jaffna Road to a cemetery a quarter of a mile past Manthkai Hospital. The van did not follow them.

It may be noted that the fifteen or so thugs spent a little under two hours at Sripathy's house, during which time those at home, including his wife and daughter, were screaming. The Army that was nearby said later that they were aware of the commotion, but had no orders to leave the premises at that late hour. Nor had they evidently alerted the Police. The thugs had taken Sripathy two miles south to Manthikai, again without any fear of being checked.

The thugs who had shown themselves were certainly not persons of that area. Their brief was evidently to cause hurt and to terrorise, but not to kill.

At the cemetery, the thugs forced Sripathy into the pit and beat him quite harmlessly below the head with branches from erukkalai bushes found at such places. They warned him not to go to the school and to quit the area in a week. Sripathy then walked to the hospital.

It was here that Sripathy encountered the first clear signs of the new order being ushered in by 'peace'. A society conditioned by fear was reacting instinctively to the scarred face of internal terror. The MO Dr. Sivarajah and the medical staff knew Sripathy extremely well. But the sight of a bruised and bleeding Sripathy soaked in blood made them behave as though he were a total stranger. No one offered to take him home or arrange for someone to drop him by bicycle. Pt. Pedro's leading citizen had in an instant become a social leper. He walked home without delaying to relieve his family's anxiety. Some friends later had him warded at Valvettithurai Hospital. The SLMM and the Police called on him. The LTTE too commiserated with him and promised to find the culprits!

Slowly the society gained its equipoise and a stream of people began calling on Sripathy. Starting with Pt. Pedro Hospital, the initial reactions made it clear that the people had no doubts about who was behind the attack. Again at Hartley College, several of the teachers decided that the least they could do was to boycott classes on Tuesday. In conformity with the logic of internal terror some other teachers maintained that the issue was one man's personal problem! (Protests and motions of condemnation poured in subsequently, helped by the fact that the LTTE denied involvement.) On the Jaffna Road in Pt. Pedro, where the night traffic had been heavy and lively in recent times, the road became silent and lifeless as though an invisible hand had imposed night curfew.

NEWS TRACK

Call for PTA to be repealed: Sept 24 - The government has been urged to immediately repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act and release all suspects held under it. The call was made at a meeting held at the Trincomalee Town Hall organised by the Centre for Human Rights and Development. Several speakers at the meeting appealed that everyone, irrespective of their ethnic and religious differences, should pressurise the government to act swiftly.

A leading human rights lawyer Chandrapala Kumarage said state terrorism flourishes in the name of implementing the PTA. The organiser of CHRD, S. Kandasamy, said his organisation had held several seminars in Jaffna and other parts of the country against the continuation of the PTA and the continued detention of the suspects arrested under that law.

Tamil National Alliance parliamentary group leader R.Sampanthan said, acts committed under the PTA had affected almost every family in the Northeast Province. Women had been abused and several youths had disappeared after the arrest under the PTA, he added. "The government, which labelled LTTE as a terrorist organisation, is now engaged in peace talks with that group to find a permanent political solution to the ethnic conflict. This proves that the PTA has failed to have any impact on the struggle waged by the LTTE. This fact is enough for the government to repeal the PTA immediately from the country's Statute book," Mr.Sampanthan said.

Every government in power uses the PTA as a political tool. Several politicians have eliminated their rivals using the PTA. Security personnel in connivance with politicians and lawyers have made quick money by arresting wealthy persons under the PTA Act and blackmailing them, Mr.Sampanthan said.

Extortion stepped up in Colombo: Sept 24 - Consequent to the lifting of ban on the LTTE there has been a marked increse in the extortion of money from Tamil merchants and businessmen in Colombo, a report by Thirnavukkarasu Sathasivam appeared in the Lanka Academic website on September 23. The report added: With the lifting of the ban, LTTE teams of "fundraisers" are arriving in Colombo and are approaching Tamil merchants in Colombo for money, Tamil sources say. Several Tamil businessmen in Colombo were 'asked to contribute' enormous amounts of money to the organization.

The demands are reported to vary from 300, 000 to 50million rupees and they have been warned of the "consequences" of shunning the LTTE. The extortion by the LTTE has increased sharply since the beginning of September. It is learned that some of the Tamil businessmen in the Pettah area of Colombo were threatened with their lives and harm to their family members if they failed to cough up the "contributions". Complaints to the Police aren't getting any attention. The victims are getting increasingly frustrated and worried about their own safety by this new attitude of the Police in Colombo.

The story is similar in Jaffna where LTTE members are demanding at least 5 million rupees from each merchant in Jaffna. Besides the money, each merchant is asked to contribute towards the building of tombstones at the 'Maveerar' cemetery. The merchants who express some reluctance to pay the money are asked to 'come for an interview with Paapa', at the LTTE's Jaffna office located in Potpathy Road near Kokuvil. Prices of goods in Jaffna have incresed sharply due to the "taxation" imposed by the LTTE and the public is aware that when the merchants are forced to give money to the LTTE, the prices of goods will increase further.

SLA escorts LTTE convoy to Vanni: Sept 24 - A large number of Liberation Tigers from Batticaloa-Ampara district travelled to the Vanni region by road today, escorted by Sri Lankan troops. Sources said 285 LTTE members made the journey. The cadres were seen off from LTTE controlled Illupadichenai in the Manmunai West Divisional Secretariat in Batticaloa by LTTE officials led by the LTTE military commander for Batticaloa-Ampara district, Robert. The cadres travelled in five buses and 2 pick ups and were met by Sri Lanka Army troops at Black Bridge in Chenkalady. The vehicles in which the LTTE members were travelling were escorted to Vavuniya by two SLA armoured personnel carriers at the front and back of the convoy. Later Sri Lankan police escorted the cadres from Vavuniya to Omanthai where they were received by LTTE representatives from the Vanni.

Of the LTTE contingent, 200 were female fighters, travelling to participate in the Tamil Eelam Women Uprising Conference to be held in Vanni. The cadres were expected to participate in the remembrance functions for LTTE Lt. Col. Thileepan.

Bus driver in custody: Sept 24 - After a fatal road accident in the LTTE controlled area of Puliyankulam, the LTTE took into custody the driver along with the bus, which had left from Kalutara on a pilgrimage. Military sources said that an eight-year-old boy was killed when the bus returning from Nagavihara in Jaffna had collided with a van plying to Jaffna with civilians. The bus and driver had been produced before an LTTE 'court' in Kilinochchi, which had ordered a deposit of Rs. 20,0000 as surety bail to release the driver and the bus.

The owner of the bus, a member of the Kalutara branch of the Lanka Private Bus Owners' Association had gone to Kilinochchi. Meanwhile, Chairman of the Lanka Private Bus Owners' Association Chief Gemunu Wijeratne said they had complained to the SLMM regarding the matter. He also said they had asked the SLMM to make arrangements to get the bus and its driver released at a reasonable sum as they could not pay so much as bail.

Constitutional amendment challenged: Sept 24 – As many as 32 petitions have been filed in the Supreme Court challenging the legality of the 19th constitutional amendment, which seeks to restrict the presidential powers to dissolve parliament after its one-year existence.

The Secretary for the Centre for Policy Alternatives, two People's, Alliance parliamentarians Messrs Janaka Bandara Tennekon and Velayutham Puthirasigamony, the Chief Minister of Sabragamuwa Provincial Council, Mr. Mohan Salia Ellawella, the Secretary of the Sinhala Jathika Sangamaya. Dr.Piyasena Dissanayake, the Secretary of the Public Services Trade Union Mr.W.H.Piyadasa and three other lawyers filed petitions today.

The petitioners have requested the SC to determine that the said constitutional amendment directly infringed the sovereignty and the franchise of the people and to order that a referendum be in this regard in addition to the passage with a two third majority in parliament if the government intended to proceed with the amendment.

US counter-terrorism expert in Colombo: Sept 25 - US Counter-terrorism coordinator is to visit Sri Lanka in a bid to integrate intelligence, law enforcement, legal and diplomatic e-

forts against terrorism, the US embassy said.

"My emphasis will be on the integration of intelligence, law enforcement, legal and diplomatic efforts against terrorism," the expert Francis X. Taylor said. During his visit from the end of this month Ambassador Taylor will be holding meetings with his counterparts in the interior, foreign affairs and security ministries with whom he hopes to explore areas in which the US can be of assistance to the government of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Taylor has served as in this capacity with the rank of Ambassador at large since July 2001. With his department in the lead of dealing with international terrorism, Ambassador Taylor's office has primary responsibility for developing, coordinating, and implementing US counter-terrorism policy. His duties include co-ordinating US government's efforts to improve counter-terrorism co-operation with foreign governments, including the policy and planning of the Department's Anti-terrorism Training Assistance Programme.

During a 31-year military career, Ambassador Taylor rose to the rank of Brigadier General. Immediately prior to his State Department appointment he directed the US Air commanders of all Air Force activities independent professional investigative services in fraud, counter-intelligence, and major criminal matters.

Islamic Tamil Literary Conference: Sept 25 - The World Islamic Tamil Literary Conference is to be held at the BMICH in Colombo from October 22 to 24. This international Tamil Literary conference will be the first of its kind to be held in Sri Lanka under state patronage. The conference being held under the auspices of the Ministry of Muslim Religious Affairs will be attended by about 100 foreign Islamic literary figures and 300 local delegates. The aim of this exercise according to Cabinet Minister and leader of the Sri Lanka Muslim Conference Mr Rauf Hakeem is to highlight the contribution made by Muslims to the development of Tamil literature.

Rocket launcher from Lanka for Veerappan: Rameswaram, Sept 25 - A powerful US made rocket launcher, other weapons and ammunition seized here are believed to have been smuggled by militants in Sri Lanka possibly for the notorious bandit leader Veerappan, a detective said. He said the militants who brought the 4.5 ft rocket launcher along with ammunition in a boat had escaped as soon as the news about the seizure of the weapons broke out. A massive hunt had been launched to arrest the militants and seize the boat which brought them to India.

The detective said the militants were alleged to have brought in two consignments - one containing drugs and ammunition for AK-47 rifle marked 'KMS' and the other containing a rocket launcher and ammunition. He said the first consignment had been left at the hardware shop of a DMK member and the second had been shifted to a lorry service office from the hardware shop.

The police have arrested five persons and raided various places including the houses of the hardware shop owner. Asked whether the consignment was meant for bandit leader Veerappan, the official said the militants had given a clue in one but it was yet to be confirmed. The official said top intelligence personnel were probing the case. *(ChennaiOnline News Service)*

LTTE takes 7 Soldiers into custody: Sept 26 - The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam on September 25 morning took seven soldiers of the Sri Lanka Army into custody when they entered a security zone between two LTTE camps at Kumburupiddy, 22 km north of Trincomalee town, Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission sources said. "All steps are being taken to release the soldiers in view of the prevailing goodwill between both sides," Tamilnet said quoting a LTTE official in Kilinochchi. Army sources said the soldiers had gone to the area in a tractor to collect sand. The international Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission officials were holding talks with the LTTE leaders in Killinochchi, regarding the soldiers' release.

Defence budget to be slashed: Sept 26 - With the peace process gaining momentum and the first round of talks in Thailand showing unexpected success, the government is slashing next year's defence budget from Rs 51 billion this year to Rs 35.6 billion.

Deputy Finance Minister Bandula Gunawardena presenting next year's budget estimates on behalf of Finance Minister K.N.Choksy at yesterday's Cabinet meeting said the total expenditure was estimated at Rs 656 billion.

He said the expected revenue and foreign grants totalled upto Rs 317 billion while the borrowing limit was estimated at Rs 349 billion.

Mr. Gunawardena said that interest for loans had accrued to Rs 130 billion and the debt repayment was Rs 197 billion and there was still a deficit of Rs 10 billion after repaying this amount.

The total revenue this year was Rs 278.2 billion while the total expenditure and net lending was Rs 413.6 billion with an overall budget deficit of Rs 135.4 billion. Among other allocations were Rs. 116, 650 million for subsidies and transfers including Rs. 33,500 million for pensions, 3,400 million for payments to disabled soldiers, Rs. 45 million for school meals/ Janasaviya , Rs. 600 million for school uniform , Rs. 9,000 million for Samurdhi , Rs. 2,000 million for fertiliser Subsidy , Rs. 2,300 million for internally displaced persons and others.

Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe during his recent visit to New York said the country would have to pay its war debts- mainly the loans to buy arms - for the next six years at least.

Bush thanks SL for stand against terror: Sept 26 - The President of the USA George W. Bush in a letter to Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe has expressed his gratitude to the people and the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka for their assistance to rid the world of terrorism. The following is the text of the letter: "I express the gratitude of the American people for all the assistance extended by you and your people to rid the world of terrorism. The strength to overcome violence, hate and hostility is derived by the bonds of friendship between both our countries. It was a great pleasure to have met you in Washington last July.

"Terror struck the USA on September 11 last year. The right of the people to live in freedom, peace and prosperity had been challenged by these acts of terrorism. But we could overcome these cruel forces by determination and strength. The mutual understanding that exists between our two countries would help us move forward meeting the aspirations of our peoples who love freedom and peace."

Westborg meets Thamilchelvan: Sept 26 - Norwegian Ambassador to Colombo, Mr. Jon Westborg held discussions with the Political Wing leader of the Liberation Tigers, Mr.S.P.Thamilchelvan, in Kilinochchi on 25 September. The discussions, which were held at the LTTE's political Head office in Kilinochchi, centred around setting up of LTTE Peace Secretariat in the Northeastern Province which will have its head office in Kilinochchi with branches functioning in all districts of the NE province.

Senior members of the LTTE's political section Mr. Thangan, Mr. Pulithevan, Mr.Tholkapiyan and Mr. George accom-

panied Mr.Thamilchelvan in the discussions. Norwegian diplomat Mr. Thomas Strangeland also took part in the discussions. Sources said the discussions focussed also on de-mining, resettlement of internally displaced people and establishing normalcy in the NE Province.

No crisis says President: Sept 26 - Presidential media spokesman Harim Pieris responding to reports in Colombo newspapers said, "The report refers to a co-habitation crisis with President Kumaratunga. The President's Office wishes to reiterate that there is no such crisis in co-habitational government, which is the concurrent exercise of dual mandates and is the will of the sovereign people of Sri Lanka reflected through their franchise. Co-habitation by definition would include differences of opinion and policy between the parties, which however in no way precludes working together on matters of national importance.

It is correct that the President has requested full details of the peace talks in Sattahip, Thailand, including the possibility of a Presidential nominee to the talks. This is a bounden duty of the nation's popularly elected executive head of state and government. The President's advisory and cautionary role in the current peace process has been a routine and salutary practice since the start of the present process."

UK envoy in talks with Thamilchelvan: Sept 27 - The British High Commissioner in Sri Lanka, Mr. Stephen Evans, met the political head of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam Mr.S.P.Thamilselvan at Killinochchi and discussed issues related to development of northeast. A team of officials including Mr. Nicholas Brewer, Director General of Programme, Department of International Development, accompanied the UK envoy.

The UK envoy arrived in Palaly by air this morning and held discussions with the Jaffna District Government Agent Mr.N.Shanmuganthan and other local heads of government departments to assess the situation on the ground. The UK delegation then visited Navanthurai Tamil Government School. Later the delegation visited Nallur Kandasamy Temple. It left Jaffna in the afternoon by road through A9 highway to Killinochchi and held discussions with the political head of the LTTE Mr.Thamilchevan at the Killinochchi secretariat.

Govt and LTTE exchange POWs; Sept 28 - The LTTE and the government exchanged prisoners of war in Omanthai, on the southern border of the Vanni region.

The Tigers freed seven POWs and the GOSL released thirteen LTTE troopers in exchange. The commanders of the LTTE's Northern and Western Front Forces and the commander of its artillery division met the commanders of the Sri Lanka army and navy at a special ceremony for the POW exchange Saturday around 11.30 a.m. Col. Jeyam, the commander of the LTTE's Western Front Forces and Col. Theepan, the commander of the LTTE's Northern Front Forces received the released Tigers.

Ancient burial site found: Sept 28 - An ancient burial site believed to date back to the Neolithic age, has been found at Yatigalpoththa in Galewela area by the Regional Archeology Department in Kandy recently. According to the Assistant Director Excavation of the Department of Archaeology Nimal Perera, the cemetery covers an area of around 25 acres and could

contain about 40,000 graves. He said that the graves which are made of stone slabs are embedded with red and black clay pots which contain ashes and certain items such as beads.

"The technology of these earthenware is very high since the inside of the pots are black and the outside is red," Mr. Perera said. He added that since there are no settlement sites found in the vicinity it is difficult to ascertain to whom the sites belonged to. He also said these types of burial sites have been found in Ibbankatuwa in Galewala and Kondadeniya in Yapahuwa area.

Court holds policemen guilty of torture: Sept 29 - The Attorney General (AG), on a directive from the Supreme Court, has called for relevant documents from the Registrar of the Supreme Court and instructed the Inspector General of Police to consider taking action against police officers who had been found guilty for violating the Fundamental Rights (FR) of Yogalingam Vijitha, a 27-year-old woman of Kayts in Jaffna district.

Three member bench of the Supreme Court at the conclusion of the inquiry in the FR case filed by Vijitha had directed the AG , "to consider taking steps under the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment Act No: 22 of 1994 against the respondents and any others who are responsible for the acts of torture perpetrated on the petitioner woman Vijitha."

She had cited nine respondents including eight police officers and an informant in her FR petition and sought relief for the alleged infringement of her fundamental rights secured by Articles 11, 13(1) and 13(2) of the Constitution.

After the inquiry the three-member bench of the SC held that the first to fifth and ninth respondents (all are police officials) had violated the petitioner's fundamental rights guaranteed under Article 11 of the Constitution. The SC further ordered that a sum of Rs: 250,000/- be paid as compensation and costs to the petitioner out of which Rs: 150,000/- be paid personally by the first, third and ninth respondents in equal shares and the balance Rs: 100,000/= by the State.

Millionaire woman in court: Sept 30 - A millionaire businesswoman appeared in a Colombo court on 27 September charged with producing false travel documents to send her client to Japan. When the trial was taken up the accused pleaded not guilty.

Last month the accused was enlarged on cash bail in Rs. 25,000 by the Court of Appeal and the case was referred back to the Colombo Chief Magistrate. She was also directed to report to the CID on the last Sunday of every month. The businesswoman who acted as an agent was arrested by the CID after her client Kumudini produced forged documents to the Japanese embassy in order to obtain a visa. The Embassy tipped off the CID where Kumudini was arrested. Kumudini divulged the name of the agent woman who resides in Kotte. The agent had allegedly charged Rs. 650,000 from Kumudini to send her to Japan. Kumudini was released after her counsel made submissions to the magistrate that she was not responsible for the forged documents.

Bar Association secretary indicted: Oct 1 - The Secretary of the Bar Association of Sri Lanka, Bandula Wijesinghe, was indicted before the Colombo High Court on 1 October for allegedly giving false information to police aimed at protecting the main accused in the murder of Assistant Superintendent of Customs Sujith Prasanna.

High Court judge S. I. Imam released Wijesinghe on Rs. 500,000 personal bail and Rs. 500,000 surety bail.

In this case, Dharmasiri Bandula Wijesinghe was indicted with allegedly giving protection to a fugitive, the first accused Anura Weerawansa who had committed a crime punishable with death, by giving a false statement to a police officer at the Maradana Police station.

Bandula Wijesinghe had made a statement that the main accused Anura Weerawansa was kidnapped by a gang at Maradana. The two accused were indicted with conspiring and aiding and abetting to commit the crime during the period from March 24 to April 4, 2001 at Colombo and Waikkal. Bandula Wijesinghe was indicted with allegedly giving protection to Anura Weerawansa who had allegedly committed the murder of Sujith Prasanna on March 24, 2001 at Kiribathgoda. At the magisterial inquiry it was revealed that Bandula Wijesinghe had informed the police that Anura Weerawansa had sought his help to meet Attorney-at-Law Hemantha Warnakulasuriya on April 9, 2001 stating that there was a move to arrest him over the murder of Sujith Prasanna. Bandula Wijesinghe had informed the police that in the afternoon of the said date while the two were in front of Hemantha Warnakulasuriya's residence at Norris Canal Road in Maradana an unidentified gang had forcibly kidnapped Anura Weerawansa.

New IGP: Oct 2 - After weeks of disputes and uncertainties the Constitutional Council yesterday decided to appoint Senior DIG T. Anandarajah as the Inspector General of Police. The decision was taken at a meeting of the Constitutional Council presided over by the Prime Minister in the absence of the Speaker. Opposition Leader Mahinda Rajapakse also was not present at the meeting. President Chandrika Kumaratunga had recommended the appointment of Mr. Anandarajah as the IGP and this had been backed by Interior Minister John Amaratunga though DIG H.M. B. S. Kotakadeniya and some Sinhala Buddhist groups had objected to the appointment.

The Constitutional Council which met at the Speaker's official residence had earlier differed a decision on Mr. Anandarajah's appointment because of a dispute over seniority. But the President made the recommendation for the second time and the council yesterday accepted it.

Hearings on constitutional amendments begin: Oct 1 - Thirty-two petitions filed against the proposed eighteenth and nineteenth constitutional amendments tabled by the government were taken up today for inquiry before a seven-member bench of the Supreme Court.

In brief, according to the draft eighteenth amendment, the members of the Constitutional Council (CC) and other members of the independent commissions for Election, Police, Judiciary and Public Service cannot be prosecuted in courts and no decision of the Constitutional Council can be challenged in courts including the Supreme Court on the grounds of fundamental rights violations. According to the nineteenth amendment, the President cannot dissolve parliament after one year of its existence on the President's own volition and also parliamentarians who vote according to their conscience, but against the decision of the parties to which they belonged, cannot be expelled from any party.

New Tamil daily in Jaffna: Oct 1 - A new Tamil daily newspaper, *Namathu Eelanadu,* hit the stands in Jaffna today. With the arrival of Eelanadu, readers in the northern peninsula will have four daily papers to provide them news and views. The paper's editor Mr. Sivasubramaniam Raguram, said that Eelanadu will be published on the web too.

Eelanadu would be competing in the Jaffna newspaper market with the dailies Uthayan, Valampuri and Thinakkural. The Tamil dailies published fromColombo, Thinakaran and

Virakesari are also available in the peninsula now. Uthayan was the only daily that was able to continue publishing in the northern peninsula after the Sri Lanka Jaffna army captured Jaffna in early 1996. It ran unhindered and without any potential or real competitors in Jaffna until the launch of the daily, Valampuri, in December 1999.

Demonstrations at Valaichenai intersection: Oct 01 - More than a thousand protestors demanding the opening of the Valaichenai junction on the Batticaloa-Colombo highway Tuesday smashed road barriers and damaged a Police jeep when Sri Lankan security forces occupying the key intersection declined to accede to their request, Tamilnet reported. According to this report, the protest began in the early hours of the morning as hundreds of people from the Valaichenai town and surrounding villages sat across the junction and in front of the Police station straddling the intersection, urging the S.L security forces to open the road to the public round the clock under the terms of the Ceasefire Agreement between the Liberation Tigers and the Government of Sri Lanka.

The Sri Lanka Police occupies the junction and several public and private buildings there. The main part of the intersection remains blocked permanently. Part of the junction was opened last month for the public from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. after many requests from local residents and politicians.

The key junction, along with many shops, buildings etc., was inside a heavily fortified camp for more than 12 years.

An altercation erupted when the Officer in Charge of the Valaichenai junction Police station, Mr. H.K.D.M Podimathaya and the Assistant Superintendent of Police for the area, Mr. S. M Jayatilaka told the protestors that they cannot open the intersection roads as they had no orders from higher authorities to do so. The crowd was further inflamed when a Police constable at the scene hit a boy among the protestors. The crowds then smashed the windows of Police jeep parked there.

Meanwhile, conference was held between the civil affairs officer of the Sri Lanka army's 23-2 Brigade in the Valaichenai paper factory, Major Bertie Perera, local officials of the LTTE, the parish priest of the Valaichenai St. Theresa's Church, Rev. Alex Norbert and the Police to bring the situation under control.

Following the discussion the protestors were asked to give time until 7 October when the Police would be in a position to take a positive decision on the road opening.

PTA detainees on hunger strike: 02 - One hundred and thirty nine detainees held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), at the Kalutara prison yesterday launched a hunger strike demanding speedier hearing of their cases. They also demanded they be released forthwith if there is insufficient evidence against them.

PTA detainees who are on strike have warned they had decided not to drink even water throughout the fast.

A top official of the Prisons Headquarters told the press that the 139 detainees had informed of the strike in a letter written to the Prisons Commissioner General.

More than 300 PTA detainees at the Kalutara prison launched a hunger strike several months ago but later agreed to call off after representatives of the Attorney General's Department promised the detainees to expedite instituting legal action against them.

The Attorney General's Department instructed State Counsels to withdraw all cases filed under the PTA if the prosecution depended on the confessions purported to have been made by the suspects. Meanwhile, the Action Committee for the Release of Political Prisoners of the Center for Human Rights and Development told a media conference that the recent developments of the critical situation of the political detainees had come to a peak.

The committee pointed out that the 15 Tamil Parliamentarians belonging to several parties would raise the current situation in Parliament. The committee warned the government if their support is needed for the 17th and 18th Amendments, the they should look into this crisis of the detainees.

The committee said during the PoW swap which took place recently, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe promised to take PTA cases into consideration. "LTTE top officials were allowed to take medical treatments in Colombo, but PTA detainees who come from poor Tamil families are treated in this way," the committee said. They warned until the last political prisoner is released they would continue to agitate on this matter.

18 soldiers indicted for killing 35: Oct 03 - 18 Army personnel were indicted yesterday before the Colombo High Court charged with committing the murder of thirty five villagers at Miletenna in Poonai.

In this case 18 Army personnel (three had died) were indicted on 85 counts including unlawful assembly and committing murder of 35 villagers on August 9, 1992. The alleged massacre had occurred after the death of Major General Denzil Kobbekaduwa and other high-ranking military personnel in a blast in August 1992. On the charges being read the accused pleaded not guilty and the court fixed the case for hearing before a seven member jury.

Second LTTE convoy uses sea route: Oct 04 - A large number of Liberation Tigers, escorted by international ceasefire monitors, travelled Thursday from Mullaitivu to the eastern province along the sea route agreed by the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE two months ago. This is the second such convoy to use the route. The contingent of up to 170 LTTE soldiers going home on leave were seen off from Mullaitivu at 7.45am by Lt Col Mangalesh, the Commander of Sea Tigers, and Lt Col Robert, Commander of Jeyanthan Unit which is based in Batticaloa-Ampara, TamilNet sources said.

Lt Col Seliyan, Deputy Commander of Sea Tigers, led the convoy of 4 boats carrying the 170 soldiers which disembarked in Eastern Province at 13:15. Four members of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) also travelled in the boats. On August 18, the first Sea Tiger convoy sailing from Mullaitivu under the working agreement between the Sri Lankan Navy and the Liberation Tigers brokered by international ceasefire monitors reached Vaakari with a large number of LTTE troops.

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LTTE man demands young escapee back: Oct 5 - A youth, who had arrived on a motor-cycle at Kumburumulla Army detachment, about 6 km. southeast of Valachchenai on 03 October around 4 p.m. had sought protection against him being abducted by some LTTE cadres who were chasing him. The youth, identified as Sivaku-

maran Kadiranadan (24) of Old Fair Road, Sittandy had told the Army that he was to be abducted and conscripted. A few minutes later, a self-claimed LTTE member named Nirojan who had shown up at the gate of the Kumburumulla Army detachment, demanded Sivakumaran Kadiranadan be set free since he was there to take him. This LTTE member had further stated that the said victim committed an offence and they (LTTE) wanted to punish him. However, the Security Forces personnel had refused to hand over the youth to the LTTE member and informed the SLMM and Valachchenai Police about this incident.

Later the youth and the motor-cycle were handed over to Valachchenai Police for further investigations.

Major hartal shuts down Trinco: Oct 05 - The port city of Trinco-malee was virtually shut down yesterday as hundreds of demonstrators took to the streets protesting against the continuing detention of six soldiers by the LTTE. Relatives of the victims were joined by residents who marched through the streets as truce monitors sought the release of the six men.

SLMM spokesman Teitur Torkelsson said transport was at a standstill in Trincomalee where shops and offices shut as a sign of protest against the abductions by the Tiger rebels on September 25.

Two days earlier, the Tigers urged by the truce monitors and freed one of the seven soldiers on humanitarian grounds while the SLMM has asked the LTTE to release all the soldiers immediately. The soldier freed on Wednesday had been giving blood to his son who is suffering from leukaemia, but missed two transfusions while he was being held by the Tigers.

The LTTE has demanded the release of two of its cadres remanded in custody in exchange for the release of the abducted soldiers. Meanwhile, papers are expected to be presented to the Attorney General for the release on bail of the two LTTE cadres who were remanded by the Kantale Magistrate on September 2, Mr. Torklesson said.

Mr. Torkelsson said SLMM chief Trond Furuhovde would likely to meet LTTE leaders again in a bid to end the stand-off.

Call for removal of North-East governor: Oct 05 - The Jaffna District Co-ordinating Committee (JDCC) unanimously adopted a resolution that the northeast provincial governor Major General (retd) Asoka Jayawardene be removed from the office for failing to co-operate with the local officials in their effort towards development of the district. Tamil National Alliance Jaffna district parliamentarian Mr.M.K.Sivajilingam proposing the resolution said provincial governor should be immediately removed from the office as he has become a major obstacle to the district''s development. Presiding over the third meeting of the Jaffna DCC Minister Mr. T.Maheswaran said that the north-east governor has failed to attend the DCC meetings for the third time. The Minister reminded the house that provincial governor Major General Jayawardene had attended the Jaffna DCC meeting and extended his co-operation under the then Peoples Alliance government.

LTTE cadres denied access: Oct 5 - One hundred and seventeen LTTE cadres attempting to enter an uncleared area in Karadiyanaru through Valaichchenai and Black Bridge were turned back by the army, the army website said yesterday. One LTTE member who arrived at the army detachment at Mankerni around 5 pm had sought permission to transfer 110 LTTE cadres

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including 40 disabled members to the uncleared areas. However, the Commanding Officer had informed the LTTE cadre that this LTTE request for passage should be made through the SLMM representatives if they wanted to continue with this passage.

Despite this around 6.30pm two buses, two vans and three motor bicycles had shown up at Kadjuwatta entry/exit point and demanded to continue their journey at which point the security forces personnel had declined to allow their movement beyond the entry/exit point since they had not followed the laid down procedures.

With the Commanding Officer arriving at the scene at this juncture, it was once again explained that the LTTE had to first inform the SLMM of such a movement, and as such a request had not been made their movement could not be accommodated. At this point the LTTE abandoned their plans and had returned to the Pannichchankerni area.

EPDP office in Delft attacked: Oct 6 – The office of the EPDP led by Douglas Devananda, MP, in Delft - one of the Jaffna islets - was on October 6 night stormed by a large crowd of persons and set on fire with one EPDP cadre being taken by them as captive. One motor cycle and a landmaster vehicle had been set on fire and office furniture were ransacked. The EPDP has charged that the LTTE instigated and carried out the attack.

According to LTTE sources, an EPDP cadre earlier that day had assaulted a civilian who sustained cut injuries on his head. This incident allegedly provoked the civilians to smash up the EPDP office. One EPDP activist Sivachandran Satheeskumar alias Ameen was taken by the crows as captive. Other EPDP activists in the Delft are reportedly under the protection of the police. The victim in the earlier incident who reportedly sustained cut injuries K. Loganathan(46) was admitted to hospital for treatment.

Five other cadres of the EPDP escaped and sought refuge with the Sri Lankan police, and all six were handed over to the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) when its representatives arrived at the scene, the Uthayan said.

Voice of Tigers seeks official status: Oct 7 - An LTTE plan to set up a radio station with a country-wide coverage in a bid to propagate its views on the peace process and other matters is under consideration, a top government official said today. Prime Minister's Secretary Bradman Weerakoon said the LTTE was asked to make a formal application to the Telecommunication Regulatory Commission.

LTTE should not be disarmed: Oct 7 - CHENNAI: "Unless and until a permanent peace is achieved in Sri Lanka, the LTTE should not be disarmed," Joesph Pararajasingham, Tamil National Alliance member of the Sri Lankan parliament stressed here on 5 October. "The security of the Tamils in Sri Lanka depends on the LTTE and the LTTE's strength is their arms," noted Pararajasingham in an interview to a newspaper.

The MP who is also a senior vice president of the Tamil United Liberation Front is on a private visit to India and he sought a meeting with Pazha.Nedumaran, leader of the Tamil National Movement, presently detained under the POTA for his pro-LTTE stance, but denied permission. Singing the praise of the LTTE, the MP said that the LTTE had taken to arms to protect the Tamils from the oppressive measures of the Sinhalese government. "Right now they have laid down their arms as part of the peace talks. But you cannot ask them to hand over the arms," he stressed.

Detainees reject appeal to call off fast: Oct 7 - The Tamil political prisoners detained at Kalutara prison rejected offers made by two cabinet ministers of the United National Front (UNF) government to call off their seven-day hunger strike. Ministers Mr. T.Maheswaran and Mr.Rajitha Senaratne visited the Kalutara prison and held talks with the Tamil detainees and requested them to break off their hunger strike, assuring them the government would take steps to expedite the disposal of their cases in courts. However, the prisoners had rejected Ministers' appeal to call off their action.

One hundred and eighty nine detainees at Kalutara prison and nineteen at Welikada have been on hunger strike since 1 October, demanding their immediate release, without any condition. They have been detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA).

Teachers march thwarted: Oct 8 - Hundreds of teachers who gathered in Colombo on Teachers' Day, to present their grievances to the Premier at his Temple Trees residence, were turned away by a number of baton wielding policemen, at the Dharmapala Mawatha junction. The teachers of ten trade unions gathered under the umbrella of the Education Trade Union Alliance initially gathered at Viharamahadevi Park and staged a picketing for several minutes before starting the protest march.

Addressing the gathering during the picket, national convenor of the Alliance, Ven. Yalvela Pangnasekara Thera said that the status accorded to teachers by the Ministry was evident from the fact that it did not know when Teachers' Day was marked. "While Teachers' day falls today, the Ministry had stated the day fell on October 5," he said.

Bishop pleads for prisoners release: Oct 7 - Rt. Rev. Dr. Rayappu Joseph Bishop of Mannar made an urgent appeal to Sri Lanka's Prime Minister Mr. Ranil Wickramasinghe to take immediate action to save fasting Tamil political prisoners from death. The Bishop said that he visited the Kalutara prison and that condition of the fasting prisoners is deteriorating rapidly. "Fourteen have become unconscious, forty seven have vomited blood and the rest I saw sitting or lying, most of them senseless", the Mannar Bishop said.

In his appeal the Bishop said, "The demand of these prisoners is that the remand prisoners under section 5 and those kept in the remand on forced confessions invariably under torture be released and those convicted under the draconian PTA and Emergency law be given amnesty. My urgent request in the name of peace in the country is that your Honor, without loss of time, meet these dying prisoners through your personal representative in order to see their sorry plight and to tell them what the government can do to them immediately within a specified time frame. This is the only way open to prevent deaths

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and it is indispensable. Thank you for your kindness to treat this matter as your immediate priority."

Escapes from LTTE custody: Oct 8 - A sixteen year old girl, who escaped from LTTE custody has lodged a complaint with the Urani Police in Batticaloa saying that she was forcibly taken away by two female LTTE cadres on 6 October after assaulting her mother. The complainant, P. Chandrakala of Batticaloa, who had also escaped the clutches of the LTTE earlier, said she had been abducted and taken to the LTTE's Kaluwankerny camp for training. She had further stated that two female LTTE cadres had come on a motor bicycle and assaulted her mother before she was forcibly dragged towards an LTTE office for an alleged inquiry. She had also stated that her parents were threatened by these female LTTE cadres saying that their house would be bombed and destroyed unless their daughter was surrendered to the LTTE.

Tamils warned not to use Lankan Police and Courts: Oct 9 – A report by Thirnavukkarasu Sathasivam in the Lanka Academic website states that the "LTTE is warning Tamil civilians in the cleared areas of north and east that they should not take their disputes to the Sri Lankan Police, and not use the Sri Lankan court systems. LTTE officials have warned that the LTTE does not authority in Tamil Eelam, and that public should use the Tamil Eelam Police to settle their disputes. In Jaffna, LTTE's man-in-charge for Educational affairs, Mr. Illakiyan, has told teachers and students recently that they should avoid going to the Police with complaints. He mentioned that the LTTE will soon open the Eelam Courts in Jaffna and will start settling domestic disputes between Tamils. LTTE has issued similar notices elsewhere in the cleared areas. In Trincomalee, LTTE's Malarvili issued similar warnings two weeks ago. On Monday(7 Oct.), LTTE announced in Batticaloa that they will form 'village committees' headed by the local LTTE leader that will in essence function as a court system.

7 lose their lives, 14 wounded: SLMM, October 10. "Seven people tragically lost their lives and fourteen people were injured when a large crowd of people forcefully entered the Kanjirankudah STF (Special Task Force of the Sri Lanka Police) camp south of Thirukkovil shortly after 17.00 on Wednesday" (9 October), a statement issued by the international Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLLM) issued on 10 October said.

The statement added: "A demonstration of an estimated 500-1000 people crowd outside the camp got out of control when the crowd broke through the main entrance and a barbed wire fence and entered the camp. According to the STF officer in command of the camp, the members of the crowd were throwing stones, burning tyres and shooting with firearms. The STF used teargas and fired rubber-bullets at the crowd and eventually fired at the people with live ammunition."

On arrival at about 8 pm on the day of the incident, "SLMM Monitors observed that most things that could burn on the outside of the camp were still on fire at that time and tyres were still burning inside the camp. Communications antenna and lights belonging to the camp were damaged and windows broken in houses inside the camp. One assault rifle was also found on the ground outside the camp."

"This is a tragic event and extremely sad loss of lives," says Major General Trond Furuhovde, Head of SLMM. "Because of an uncontrolled demonstration people are now grieving their loved ones. During only one night, Hope and Reconciliation is turned into fear and uncertainty. This calls for the restraint of the people and courage to keep our will for peace alive through these difficult times," he said.

PTA to be reviewed: Oct 10 - Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe has appointed a four-member ministerial committee to explore the possibility of repealing the Prevention of Terrorism Act No. 16 of 1980. The commitee comprising ministers John Amaratunga, Rauff Hakeem, G.L. Peiris and W.J.M. Lokubandara was asked to submit a report to the Cabinet suggesting an alternative to retain the important provisions of the act. The Premier's move came at a pre-cabinet meeting on 9 October in the wake of representations made by Minister Rauff Hakeem on the payment of compensation to political victims. The Prime Minister had said payment of compensations should start with political victims of the year 2001 and 2002.

Detainees give up fast: Oct 10 - More than 150 PTA detainees in the Kalutara prison suspended their death fast campaign on 9 August after Minister and Peace negotiator Milinda Moragoda met them in a bid to defuse the situation. Minister Moragoda who was joined by Ministers Jayalath Jayawardena, T. Maheshwaran and a group of TNA parliamentarians had assured the PTA suspects that their grivances would be looked into within a month.

Mr. Moragoda told the press though the detainees had promised to suspend their fast campaign on that assurance, he had pointed out to them that he could however not guarantee the release of all detainees at the end of this period. "I told them that at the end of one month some may be still there and some may not," Mr. Moragoda said.

Probe into harassment of opp. parties: Oct 10 - Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe has ordered the Interior Ministry to make necessary arrangements to inquire into incidents of harassment and attack on the supporters of opposition parties including the People's Alliance and the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna. The PM issued this directive after a discussion he had a meeting the previous day at the Parliamentary complex with a group of PA MPs headed by the opposition leader Mahinda Rajapakse.

Ministers Karu Jayasuriya and John Amaratunga together with Interior Ministry Secretary M.N. Junaid represented the government in this discussion.

Opposition leader Mahinda Rajapakse, PA General Secretary D.M. Jayaratne, SLFP General Secretary Maithripala Sirisena, MEP leader Dinesh Gunawardene and MP Jeyaraj Fernando-pulle were in the PA delegation. DIGs H.B. Jayasundera and. D S C Kombala Vithana also participated in the discussion.

A report containing the proposed steps to be taken was handed over to the Prime Minister by the opposition leader Mahinda Rajapakse. It was decided to introduce a special system which will enable the members of parliament to examine how inquiries are conducted on every such complaint.These

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recommendations will be discussed at the next Parliamentary sessions, the premier said and undertook to review the progress monthly.

Released LTTEer among killed: Oct 11 – Newspaper reports from Colombo quoting security sources said that, among the seven persons killed when police commandos opened fire on the crowd that attempted to storm the STF camp in Ampara on 9 October, two were identified as LTTE cadres, Vijayaprakash and Nagarasa. Vijayaprakash was identified as one of the persons released by the Attorney General's Department following the signing of the ceasefire agreement.

TNA urges probe into shooting: Oct 11 – The Tamil National Alliance has called upon the "Government to hold an impartial investigation into the incident and to take appropriate action against those responsible for the unwarranted attack in the morning and the brutal killing of and causing injury to innocent Tamil civilians including students on the evening of the 9th." A statement issued by the TNA said "A delegation of members of parliament of the TNA met today the Prime Minister, the Defence Minister, the Interior Minister and urged that (1) the STF in the Amparai district be replaced by other security forces (2) an impartial investigation be carried out promptly and the offenders are appropriately punished (3) families of those killed and injured are given adequate compensation, and (4) appropriate action taken to ensure that such incidents are not repeated."

Nabbed with forged passports: Oct 11 - A wife of a millionaire businessman turned national list MP in the Premadasa government was arrested for allegedly having in her possession two forged passports on October 7, Fraud Bureau sources said. The suspect was remanded till October 22 after being produced before the Aluthkade Magistrate's Court on October 8.

The millionaire businessman, who is an owner of a group of well known garment factories, had obtained the two passports by producing forged birth certificates and identities. The first passport had been obtained in 1999 which expires in 2004 and the second was in 2000 which is valid till 2005. Investigations had revealed that by using them the suspect had travelled around the world including USA and UK. Police said that the suspect had also opened several bank accounts in Colombo banks using forged names. Investigations are continuing to ascertain the other bank accounts of the suspect.

'Armed strength vital for our protection' Oct 11 - More than hundred thousand people from Vavuniya, Jaffna and many parts of the Vanni thronged the Killinochchi grounds and its surroundings to see the military parade of the LTTE's women fighting forces, according to Tamilnet. The parade was followed by series of floats depicting the women fighting units of the LTTE. Many senior commanders of the LTTE including the head of the Intelligence, Pottu Amman, were present at the rally.

Addressing the large rally in Killinochchi, the Commander of the Sea Tigers, Colonel Soosai, said, "Our armed forces have fought for achieving our homeland, respect for our nationality and self-rule. It is important that we continue to modernize and strengthen our armed forces until we achieve these goals."

"You may ask why we should hold military parades like what you saw today in this atmosphere of peace. It is the strength of our armed forces that have helped to achieve the peace that all are enjoying now," said Colonel Soosai adding that "Sinhala people must understand that our armed forces are only for protecting our own people. They are not meant to conquer others or take other people's territories. Our armed forces are not a threat to anyone."

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Complaint of attack by LTTE: Oct 12 – The LTTE havs intensified their attacks on the members and supporters of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) on the island of Kayts in the north of Sri Lanka, the party has complained. In a ststement, it said that on October 8, a well-known member of the LTTE, Karthikesu Amirthalingam, violently assaulted SEP member Nagarajah Kodeeswaran, a 27-year-old father of three and a founding member and treasurer of the Ampihainagar Fishermen's Cooperative Union in Kayts. While Kodeeswaran managed to escape, he suffered serious knife wounds to the head, neck and shoulders. But for the fact that he was able to take shelter in a local store, in all likelihood he would have been killed. Soon after the incident, SEP members in Kayts reported it to local police, but to date no action has been taken to arrest the individual involved. He has since made violent threats against other SEP members and supporters.

Muslim MPs to be consulted: Oct 12 - Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe assured a delegation of UNP Muslim parliamentarians led by Western Region Development Minister M.H.Mohamed on 11 October that the Muslim parliamentarians would be regularly consulted and updated on the Muslim factor in the peace talks now in progress, a spokesman for the delegation said. Minister Milinda Moragoda was also present at the talks.

The UNP Muslim MPs expressed concern about their being kept ignorant regarding matters affecting Muslim interests in talks between the government and the LTTEr and urged that they should be continuously updated about the peace process. They further urged that the UNP Muslim representatives must be adequately represented in the peace initiatives.

The Prime Minister assured the Muslim Members of the parliamentary delegation that he will continually consult the Muslim parliamentary representatives and update them about the Muslim factor during the peace talks now in progress. The other members of the delegation were ministers A.R.M.A. Cader, A.H.M. Azwer, Mohamed Maharoof and Kabir Hashim and MPs M.M. Mustafa, M.A. Mohamed Maroof, Abdul Haleem and Mohamed Hassim.

Hartal cripples North-East: Oct 12 - A LTTE backed hartal paralysed life in the Northern and Eastern provinces today with burning tyres, black flags and mournful music. The hartal which left shops closed, streets deserted and transport at a standstill, was aimed at protesting against the killing of seven persons by the Police Special Task Force in Kanchankuda on 9 October and the killing of three people in Trincomalee in a grenade explosion on 11 October.

The day of mourning was called for by the LTTE through an announcement on the Voice of Tigers radio but the hartal was organised in various districts by other affiliated Tamil organisations.

Reports from the Jaffna peninsula said the movement of security forces was virtually blocked with burning tyres and logs put across the access road to the main Palaly military complex. The A9 road which links the Jaffna peninsula to the south was closed for traffic while the only buses which moved out from Vavuniya were those that came from other parts of the country.

The hartal paralyzed life in the Jaffna, Vavuniya, Mannar districts and the LTTE controlled Wanni region while in the east, all districts were paralysed, except for Trincomalee where an 18-hour curfew was lifted this morning allowing shops and market places to open for business and buses also started running. Reports from Trinco said the hartal and the day of mourning would be observed there tomorrow (13 October).

Reports from Mannar said shops were closed and streets deserted. The people there were also commemorating the death of senior LTTE member Victor who was killed at Adampan in Mannar in 1986.

TNA parliamentarian Joseph Pararajasingham said a peaceful hartal was held in Batticaloa district today and would be continued tomorrow. He expressed the hope that the hartal would not harm the peace process.

Reports from Ampara which was rocked by earlier killings said the hartal crippled normal life. Road blocks had been placed at the Karaithivu junction with barbed wire blocking the main road while similar blocks had been placed in other areas.

LTTE summons two cadres: Oct 13 - Reports from Colombo say that the two LTTE cadres, who were allegedly involved in storming the STF camp at Kanchurankudah have been summoned by the LTTE leadership to the Wanni for an inquiry. It is understood that the two, M. Vishvanathan - the LTTEs Kanchurankudah area leader - and Christie Rajah had been travelling in a tractor passing a check-point opposite the STF camp, when they were stopped by STF personnel. They said that the STF personnel had allowed the two cadres to proceed after asking them a few questions. However, these two cadres had then admitted themselves to the nearby hospital stating that they had been assaulted by the STF personnel. It was following this alleged assault that the protest campaign against the STF was launched, leading to the storming of the STF camp resulting in the death of seven civilians and injury to more than fift

Rebuilding of entire northern railway: Oct 14 - Top Australian railway consultants have submitted a feasibility report to the Transport Ministry on the rehabilitaion of the Northern railway lines which have been extensively damaged. The report for the project which is to be launched with the support of Australian and European fundings was presented to the State Transport Ministry and the Sri Lanka Railways.

According to the study the entire infrastructure facility on the railway has been destroyed or is not in existence due to the war in the north and the east. It also said there were a large number of bridges, stations, railway bungalows and minor staff quarters which needed to be rebuilt. The project team said the project was beyond the core requirement of laying the tracks between Vavuniya and Kankesanthurai in addition to the Medawachchiya -Talaimannar stretch.

Forged entry into Parliament: Oct 15 - A woman who entered the parliamentary complex possessing a forged TNL identity card was remanded until October 21 by Additional Magistrate Colombo J.R. Dissanayake. The Magistrate directed the prison Superintendent to grant permission to the CID to question the suspect.

The suspect is P.A. Kanthi a resident of Delkande Nugegoda. Welikade OIC Inspector R.L. Chandrasiri objected to bail as the suspect had previously visited the parliamentary complex thrice by using the forged ID Card. The suspect had also gone to government institutions with the forged ID card. Investigations were continuing. Serious doubts have arisen with regard to the claim of the suspect that she was a undergraduate at the Kelaniya campus police said.

The Magistrate who granted cash bail in Rs. 1500/- and surety bail in Rs. 25,000/- with two sureties cancelled the bail after an application was made by the police objecting to bail.

• "Barbaric, savage and inhuman"

Sept 29 - The Attorney General (AG), on a directive from the Supreme Court, has called for relevant documents from the Registrar of the Supreme Court and instructed the Inspector General of Police to consider taking action against police officers who had been found guilty for violating the Fundamental Rights (FR) of Yogalingam Vijitha, a 27-year-old woman of Kayts in Jaffna district.

Three member bench of the Supreme Court at the conclusion of the inquiry in the FR case filed by Vijitha had directed the AG , "to consider taking steps under the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment Act No: 22 of 1994 against the respondents and any others who are responsible for the acts of torture perpetrated on the petitioner woman Vijitha."

She had cited nine respondents including eight police officers and an informant in her FR petition and sought relief for the alleged infringement of her fundamental rights secured by Articles 11, 13(1) and 13(2) of the Constitution.

After the inquiry the three-member bench of the SC held that the first to fifth and ninth respondents (all are police officials) had violated the petitioner's fundamental rights guaranteed under Article 11 of the Constitution. The SC further ordered that a sum of Rs: 250,000/- be paid as compensation and costs to the petitioner out of which Rs: 150,000/- be paid personally by the first, third and ninth respondents in equal shares and the balance Rs: 100,000/= by the State.

The petitioner had stated in her petition that she had been subjected to severe torture when held by the Police at the Negombo police station. At one stage of the torture, a plantain flower soaked in chillie powder had been inserted by force into her vagina and had been pulled in and out for about fifteen minutes whilst she was lying on the table being held down by four policemen with her hands and legs forcibly held apart.

The SC in its twenty five page judgment said, "the facts of this case has revealed disturbing features regarding third degree methods adopted by certain police officers on suspects held in custody. Such methods can only be described as barbaric, savage and inhuman. They are most revolting and offends one's sense of human decency and dignity particularly at the present time when every endeavor is being made to promote and protect human rights."

Meanwhile the Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) has written to the Sri Lanka's Interior Minister, referring to Vijitha torture case. The AHRC said in its letter "it is a disgrace, nationally and internationally, to see that even after Supreme Court decision are being handed down in Sri Lanka no action is being taken against state officers found guilty of having committed heinous violations of domestic and international laws. Until the police are rid of criminal elements, it will be impossible to control crime and to ensure security for the people of your country. Failure to act will create further disillusionment in your ministry and the rule of law in Sri Lanka. AHRC considered the decision of the Supreme Court in this case to be of the utmost importance, as it sets a precedent in steps towards the effective implementation of the Convention Against Torture Act," the letter to the Interior Minister stated.

• Book on juvenile justice

The Children's Desk of the Lawyers for Human Rights and Development (LHRD) has published a compendium containing three of the most important international documents that deal with juvenile justice. It contains the United Nations standard minimum rules for the administration of juvenile justice (the Beijing Rules), the United Nations rules for the protection of juveniles deprived of their liberty (the JDL rules) and the United Nations guidelines for the prevention of juvenile delinquency (Riyadh Guidelines).

The launch of this publication on "International Standards on Juvenile Justice" wias held on 10 October in Colombo. This publication is launched to mark the recently held Universal Children's Day.

The three sets of rules in the compendium can be seen as guidance for a three-stage process. firstly, social policies should be applied to prevent and protect young people, secondly, the establishing a progressive justice system for young persons in conflict with the law and Finally, safeguarding fundamental rights and establishing measures for social integration of young people once deprived of their liberty, whether in prison or other institutions .

The guidelines and the rules are soft law and therefore not legally binding and are purely recommendatory. But some of the principles enunciated therein can be found encompassed in the CRC, a treaty that is binding on Sri Lanka.

"The proactive approach to juvenile delinquency in the documents could help move us beyond moral impact, if sufficient attention is paid to its contents that are more in line with the changing attitudes towards children and the perception that children are fully fledged participants in society, following the CRC process," a press release from the LHRD states.

The children's Desk has prepared and where necessary simplified and added suitable comments in relation to the Sri Lankan situation. It also includes the existing law, material to these international instruments primarily to educate and apprise Judicial Officers of international standards on juvenile justice and the changing perception of Child in society.

• LTTE and child soldiers

Oct 5 - Tamil Tigers have slowly begun demobilising child soldiers amid international pressure, but the former child soldiers lack the support they need to return to school, the Scandinavian force monitoring Sri Lanka's truce says.

Major General Trond Furuhovde, a Norwegian who heads the team monitoring the ceasefire in place since February, said the LTTE was allowing underage combatants to return home. but more needed to be done.

"When they (child soldiers) are taken out of the jungle they must have something just as good or even better," Furuhovde told the Foreign Correspondents'Association of Sri Lanka at a dinner meeting.

He said poverty had forced some children to join the rebels while the demobilisation was now posing challenges to humanitarian agencies in an area where there were hardly any facilities to rehabilitate the soldiers.

"The LTTE needs support in the way they are adjusting to a changing situation. It is important they get support," Furuhovde said, adding that he believed the LTTE was serious about freeing child soldiers in its ranks. He said sending the child soldiers home was not sufficient and they needed support to integrate in society and go back to school.

There had been a flood of complaints of conscription of child soldiers by the LTTE following reports that the guerrillas were preparing to free a large number of underage combatants. he said. "Some of the complaints we have received go back to

incidents over a year," he said. "With the message out that the LTTE is releasing children, some parents feel that if they lodge a complaint now, they will see their children again."

Furuhovde said it was important to understand the circumstances that led to the recruitment of child soldiers and the situation was not a mere "black and white" issue.

- **Tortured and Raped in Custody**

The medical report to the Eastern High Court in a Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) case revealed that twelve police personnel had raped Sathasivam Rathykala, aged 28, at night at the Polonaruwa police station on 24.11.2000. The report was submitted by the Batticaloa Judicial Medical Officer (JMO) to the Eastern High Court on September 18. The JMO in his report has recommended that counselling and rehabilitation should be provided to the suspect in consultation with a psychiatrist as the victim has suffered acute mental trauma.

Sathasivam Rathykala is still in Batticaloa prison and the inquiry has been postponed for a later date by the eastern High Court.

Ms Rathykala was arrested under PTA by four police officers from the Medigiriya police station on 24.11.2000 around 12 noon at the Polonaruwa general hospital where she was an attendant. The police suspected that she was a member of the LTTE.

She was later detained at Anuradhapura and Welikada prisons. Finally she was transferred to Batticaloa prison on 23.07.2002. At the time of arrest she lived with her parents at No 23, Shory Street Mannampitiya in the Batticaloa district.

The Eastern High Court ordered the JMO to examine the suspect woman and submit report when the defense pointed out that the suspect was subjected to severe torture by the Police while in custody.

Said the medical report signed by the JMO, Batticaloa district,.

The medico-legal report of Dr.S.Chandrapalan, Judicial Medical Officer, Batticaloa district, stated: further states: -

"The suspect Ms Rathykala was produced before me for Medico-Legal examination around 3 p.m. on 30.8.2002 in the JMO's office acting on the order of the Eastern High Court Judge. Her father is a farmer and she is the eldest child. She joined as a hospital attendant in the Polonaruwa general hospital on 24.08.2000.

She was arrested by four male police officers from the Medigiriya police station on 24.11.2000 around 12 noon when she was on duty. She was then taken to CID office in Polonaruwa in a police jeep. While in jeep she was scolded by policemen in filth and was threatened that she would be killed. One policeman stamped on her right foot forcefully with shod foot.

At about 12.30 p.m. she was handed over to the Polonaruwa CID office. There she was detained for two days. Thereafter she was produced before a doctor in Polonaruwa hospital. At that time they did not assault her. Later she was detained in the hallway till about midnight and was interrogated whether she was a member of the LTTE. She was accused of being involved in the attack of military camps in the past and was ordered to show rest of the LTTE members in her area. They also told her that she printed some names of the LTTE members in her body. She denied all these accusations.

Thereafter the Police officials ordered her to take off all the clothes except her panty and bra. She begged them not to force her to remove her clothes. Subsequently she was subjected to body search by police officials touching her whole body including her genital area and breast. She was not given lunch. Police officers from Medigiriya Police arrived and with CID officials started interrogating her. She was given a gun to operate. Around midnight the Police detained her in a cell alone. She asked the police to provide a matron for her security. But the police refused to do so. She asked the Police to inform her parents about her arrest. The Police did not accede to that request. Later she was threatened and assaulted by the police inside the cell. She then fainted. When she regained consciousness she found herself lying on the bed in another room.

The police officers forced her to remove her bra and panty. She begged and pleaded with them not to harm her. The police officials then threatened her that she would be killed and her body would be disposed after cutting her neck. Subsequently one by one twelve police officers had sexual intercourse with her until next morning 5'clock. As a result she had many scratch marks on her breasts. She also had severe abdominal pain. She was given two tablets to swallow which she identified as contraceptive pills.

The next day morning she was taken to her village in a police jeep and was asked her to show the members of the LTTE. She was blindfolded and the arms tied on the back. She denied having contacts with the LTTE. She was then handed over to the Kaduruwela Police on 26.11.2000. There she was detained for about a month. For the first ten days she was not allowed to take bath. Police officials there did not assault her but continuously questioned her.

She was taken to Magistrate on 29.11.2000. She was later handed over to the Anuradhapura prison and remanded there for about a month. She was then transferred to Welikada prison on 3.2.2002. Finally she was transferred to Batticaloa prison on 23.07.2002 and up to now she is detained at Batticaloa prison."

The suspect Ms Rathykala was referred and examined by Psychiatrist Dr.M.Ganeshan on 11.9.2002 in the psychiatric unit in the Batticaloa Teaching Hospital.

Dr.Ganeshan has reported that she has sleep-disturbances with nightmares. She has depression with suicidal ideation. Her appetite is poor. She has intrusive memories and avoidance stimuli, which bring back memories of torture. Finally Dr.Ganeshan concluded that she is suffering from post traumatic stress disorder. He recommended counseling and treatment.

The Batticaloa JMO Dr.Chandrapalan in his report said: "She appeared depressed and has intrusive thoughts. In addition she has suicidal ideation. She has revealed in her history the manner she was tortured and sexually assaulted by the Police officers in the CID office while under their custody.

"There is medical evidence of scars resulting from physical abuse. There is medical evidence of forced physical intercourse. She is suffering from mental trauma. Interrogation and bodily examination on her were performed throughout by male policemen. She was not provided a matron while she was in the police custody.

"In my opinion, the age of the scars as described are could be more than six months from the time of infliction, which is consistent with the history given by the suspect. Some scars are consistent with injuries caused by the live cigarette butts. Scars on the breasts are consistent with nail scratches from violent handling of the breast during sexual assault. Some of the scars in the breast are consistent with the injuries resulted from lighted cigarettes. Penile penetration by the erect adult penis was possible as it is consistent with the history of sexual assault given by her. It was possible that she was unclothed before the perpetrators sexually, physically assaulted her. Since she has mental trauma and has a suicidal ideation the counselling and rehabilitation are necessary with the consultation of psychiatrist, and for the treatment too. Her menstrual regularizes and lower abdominal pain could be due to the chronic stress that resulted from cumulative effects of the torture she underwent," said JMO Dr.Chandrapalan in his medico-legal report to the High Court.

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About People and Events

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We congratulate
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Pirabaharan, *son of Mr. & Mrs Vairavamoorthy of 76 Grand Drive, London SW20 9DY and* ***Marhung*** *daughter of the late Mr. & Mrs Kan on 23rd August 2002 at Highgate Hill Murugan Temple, London N6 5BA.*

Asokanathan, *son of Mr. & Mrs Asaipillai of Karampon West, Kayts, Sri Lanka and* ***Catpagavalli,*** *daughter of Dr.& Mrs Maruthu Canthaboo of 15 Argyll Gardens, Edgware, Middx HA8 5HB on 7th September 2002 at Kadwa Paidar Central Hall, Harrow, Middx HA3 8LU.*

OBITUARY

Mr.Kandiah Sivapathasundarum

Mr. Kandiah Sivapathasundarum, *Audit Senior Officer of the Auditor General, Mmabatho, South Africa; former Audit Manager, Saverimutthu & Co, Colombo; beloved husband of Sivamalar; son of late Mr. & Mrs.Kandiah of Puloly passed away in Mmabatho, South Africa on 23rd July 2002. The memorial service took place at his residence (Mmabatho) on 27th July 2002. Funeral rites and cremation took place at the Rebecca cemetery crematorium in Pretoria, South Africa on 28th July 2002.*
The wife and family members sincerely thank all relatives and friends for messages of sympathy and support during the period of bereavement.
Contact Address: 43 Kamegelo Flats, Unit 6,
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IN MEMORIAMS

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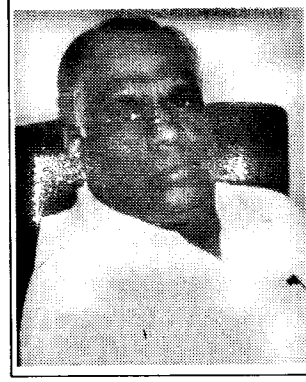

Formerly of Radio Ceylon; Parliament of Sri Lanka and BBC – Thamilosai

Greatly missed and fondly remembered by his wife Parasakthy; daughter Subhadra; son-in-law Sanchayan; grandsons Senthan, Seyon; family and friends .

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First year Remembrance
MR. S. SIVAGNANASEKERAM

"Our death is not an end if we can live on in our children and the younger generation. For they are us; our bodies are only wilted leaves on the tree of life."
-Albert Einstein

In ever loving memory of Mr. Sivagnanasekeram on the 1st anniversary of his passing away on the 4th October 2001. Sadly missed & fondly remembered by his beloved wife Gnanadevi; sons Ranjan and Mohan; mother-in-law, brother-in-law & sister-in-law families; nieces and nephews and a whole host of relatives and friends.

Twelve hard months have passed since your passing on but your wisdom and love has helped us all the way. Your beautiful memory, your voice, your laughter will always be with us and echo in our hearts for every twist and turn of our lives to come.

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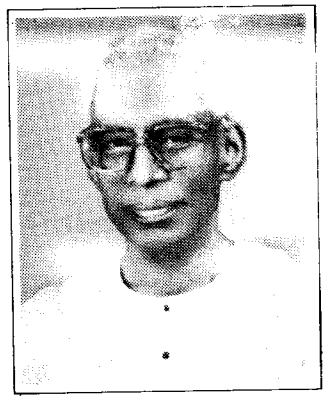
Love always,

Vasanthi, Rammie, Brinthi and Tissa

Sivamayam



VELUPILLAI KANAPATHIPILLAI

1920 – 2002

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Remembered with much love and affection by
Your loving family.

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LAVINI'S BHARATHA NATYA ARANGETRAM

For the multicultural and Indian art lovers domiciled in Canada, it was really reminiscence of their ancient cultural heritage and an enthralling and as a matter of fact an exciting evening. Lavini, by her maiden public debut of Bharatha Natyam, captivated the hearts of the entire audience in the fully packed Festival Hall Auditorium in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada on 26th July 2002.

Lavini, the daughter of Dr. and Mrs Siva Ganesa Nathan, was born in Kent, England and had her entire education in Canada. A Grade 12 student of Harry Ainlay High School along with her devotion to Eastern Art form, she plays western drums and Flute in her school band. Her love to dance developed at very early age when she learned Ballet, Highland dance, Kathak and Creative dance.

She was accompanied by eminent musicians around the world, Vocal - Gana Bhooshanam Smt Ambika Thamotheram from England, Mirdangam - Tanjore Swaminathan from South India, Violin - Sri Gesawamoorthy from Toronto and with local artiste Sri Ojas Joshi on Tabla. The repertoire was well guided by two masters of ceremonies, Tarini Siva Ganesa Nathan, sister of Lavini and her cousin Murali Balasubramanium.

From start to finish, it was a captivating performance; which was graced by VIP's including Chief Guest, David Hancock, Minister of Justice, Alberta State Government of Canada, Dr Raj Pannu economist and politician, Mr A. Sivanesa Selvan, Chief Editor of Thinnakural in Sri Lanka, uncle of Lavini who compared the east and west art forms and commented on the cultural migration of the east to west. He elegantly introduced the artistes, Siva and Yoga did the presentation to them.

Lavini's arangetram debut commenced with Nirthyaanjali followed by Alaripu, Jathiswaram, Krishna Gowthuvam, Kirthanam, Varnam, Padam, Virutham, Thillana and ended with the Mahaluxmi Manngalam in the traditional way. The high lights were Kirthanam, 'Chinnan Chiru Kiliye', a Bharatthiyar song portraying the motherly love towards her child which got the greatest applause from the audience, Padam Lord Krishna dances with Radha and the gopies of Brindhavan, on the bank of the Yaumuna river and the Virutham describing the cosmic and sculptural poses of Lord Shiva of Chidambaram.

Lavini's perfect picturesque presentation and facial expression brought traditional Kalakshetra style in utmost perfection. In her performance, the body movements and facial expressions of Lavini amply showed that she had genuinely nurtured and mastered this divine art; and the credit has to be attributed to her Guru Dr. Kanchana Sivalingam who also performed the role of the choreographer. She is a Physician by profession, working in primary and emergency medicine in Canada.

D.Selvarajah

Forthcoming Events

Nov 1 *Krishna Eekathasi; All Saints Day*
Nov 2 *Pirathosam; All Souls Day; South London Tamil Welfare Group (SLTWG) Drop In. Tel: 020 8542 3285*
Nov 4 *Deepawali; Amavasai; Kethara Gowri Viratham ends*
Nov 5 *Skantha Shashti Viratham starts*
Nov 7 *Sathurthi*
Nov 9 *Shashti; Skantha Shashti Viratham ends; Soora Samharam*
Nov 10 *Thirukalyanam*
Nov 11 *Feast of St. Martin of Tours*
Nov 15 *Sukkla Eekathasi*
Nov 16 *Feast of St. Edmund of Abingdon; SLTWG Drop in. Tel: 020 8542 3285*
Nov 17 *Pirathosam*
Nov 19 *Karthigai; Fullmoon; Sarvalaya Deepam*
Nov 20 *Vinayagar Viratham starts; Thirukarthigai Deepam*
Nov 21 *Feast of the Presentation of Blessed Virgin Mary*
Nov 22 *Feast of St. Cecillia*
Nov 23 *Sankadakara Sathurthi*
Nov 24 *Feast of Christ, the King*
Nov 30 *Feast of St. Andrews of Scotland*

At the Bhavan Centre, 4A Castletown Road, London W14 9HE. Tel: 020 7381 3086/4608

Nov 1 *6.30 p.m. East and West, Western/ Karnatic Violin Duet by Lalitha and Nandini from India*
Nov 3 *12 noon to 1.30 p.m. Bharatanatyam Lecture by Sandya Purecha. All Welcome. 6 p.m. The Bhavan and Association Sargam present Samanvaya – A Dance Jugalbandi. Kathak by Gauri Tripathi & Bharatanatyam by Sandya Purecha*
Nov 21 *7 p.m. Lecture on Kriya Yoga by Paramahamsa Yogananda. All Welcome.*
Nov 22 *7.30 p.m. Fusion Blast by M. Balachandar and his students and exciting percussion.*

Some thoughts on the SANGEETHAM FESTIVAL

I was very excited to read the first announcement in July of 'Sangeetham - Indian Summer' , a festival of Indian music and dance in London, at Sadler's Wells. The series of events made the journey of 200 miles from York to London worthwhile. As one mainly interested in music, I decided to go to the performances on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, 17th to 19th September.

On Tuesday evening my friend and I arrived at Sadler's Wells after a 2-hour journey from Croydon with the anticipation of listening to Srinivas's Mandolin. We were greeted by one of the organisers, who apologised profusely and told us that there was no performance as Srinivas and party had not arrived. It appears that they were to have arrived that morning from Chennai, travelling over time zones of over hours, to perform that evening but due to some problem they could not undertake the journey.

On Wednesday, after confirming by telephone with the organisers that Ravikiran and party were indeed physically present in London, we set off to the theatre in the evening. The first half of the evening was a joint performance by Ravikiran on what he now calls the new Chitravina and the Hindustani musician Vishwa Mohan Bhatt on what he calls the Mohan Vina. Unlike the Ghotuvadhyam, which we had seen Ravikiran play previously, his instrument looks like a slide guitar. Obviously this change has been brought about to facilitate international travel. Some of us who have heard the old masters like Mannargudi Savithiriammal remember the sweet plaintive sound of the Ghotuvadyam but the device that Ravikiran wielded did not sound anything like that.

Ravikiran announced that he would start with a short Karnatic recital, which turned out to be a rendition of one piece, Ragunayaka, in Hamsadhwani with ragam and swaram of medium length. It was followed by a Hindustani piece by Pundit V M Bhatt of slightly shorter than the usual length but the instrument sounded very twangy, without the solidity of the Sitar or Sarod.

Then they began their Kiravani ragam thanam pallavi. Ravikiran did not have sufficient time to explore the ragam fully and V M Bhatt, though a highly skilled musician, did not appear to know the nuances of this ragam. For most Karnatic/ Hindustani jugalbandis, a Sampoorna ragam (i.e. with all seven notes) is chosen as a safe bet. It is never a subtle ragam like Anandabhairavi, Begada or Saveri or a similar Hindustani rag. Most of the Sampoorna ragams are well established in Karnatic music but are not Hindustani rags, as is the case with Kiravani. A musician of the calibre of V M Bhatt can and sometimes does just go up and down the scale quite musically, but I must hasten to add that he did much better than that. Many years ago I listened to a beautiful rendition of Chakravaham, another Sampoorna ragam, by a Sitarist. He had obviously studied the ragam thoroughly before performing.

The Kiravani pallavi was an unchallenging one set to Aathy thalam. At the end, when playing swaram, Ravikiran initiated swaram in kanda nadai, quite simplistic with all notes in groups of five starting on samam (on the beat) and made worse by his prolonged plucking of thakathakida on the open string. What made it more annoying was the fact that he did exactly the same thing when concluding the first piece Ragunayaka. Perhaps it was the flavour of the month!

On the whole I had the impression that, from the shape of the instruments to the shape of the performance, it was a series of compromises. A breath of fresh air was the excellent Mridangam accompaniment by young Anand, trained by his famous grandfather Palghat Raghu.

After the interval the second part was a vocal recital by Bombay Jayashri. Her voice was not co-operating with her but she and her party gave a proper recital though a short one.

On Thursday we learnt with disappointment that T N Krishnan and Karaikudi Mani, who was the scheduled accompanist, had not arrived. The good news was that Pundit Chaurasia was going to give a solo performance and that Ravikiran was going to perform with Balamurali, which meant that Ravikiran was going to make up for the absence of a top quality violinist, who is essential to enhance Balamurali's singing. Chaurasia started with the main piece in Yaman, after telling the audience that it was the same as the South Indian Kalyani. It appears that we were spared a jugalbundi in Kalyani/Yaman, another Sampoorna ragam. He did his fast tonguing of notes but, unlike at a previous concert of his that I attended some years back, many of the notes were pure wind. He concluded with some light pieces and it was a pleasant recital - nothing remarkable.

Balamurali and Ravikiran could squeeze in only three pieces during their short recital, which formed the second part. They started with Vathapi in Hamsadhwani. Listening to him after more than ten years, I found Balamurali's voice still very good and he is still full of surprises. The second piece was 'Nee thayaradha', a composition of Balamurali's in Purvi Kalyani. Balamurali gave a sensitive rendition of Purvi Kalyani followed by a good solo by Ravikiran. The swarams were executed beautifully, with Balamurali's accurate jumps between octaves, followed faithfully by Ravikiran. Naturally the older man took the leading role. Anand on the Mridangam and another young man on the Kanjira gave very good support, notwithstanding the decades in front of them and the decades behind Balamurali. The recital concluded with Balamurali's thillana in Kathanakuthookalam. He played his rhythmic tricks and teased the others, who were of course not able to quite keep up with him.

There was general disappointment

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that the recital was short but the audience must have gone home satiated.

The organisers should be complimented for taking on such an ambitious project but they could have done better by spending less on fewer artists and presenting longer recitals. Each evening could have consisted of a short first part with perhaps local artists and groups of children, the latter guaranteeing an audience of parents at least. The second part could have been a solid recital and not all of these needed to be experimental and gimmicky, mixing all sorts of artists. The organisers must have been so overwhelmed by their activities that they forgot to offer an apology or explanation about the non-appearance of two main artists and the other changes, the responsibility for which has to be shared by the organisers and the artists themselves. Over the months there were 3 versions of the programme and the reality was yet another version. It was sad to see the large hall only a third full. I understand from my friends that the performances on Friday and Saturday were better attended, but they felt that the nearly 2- hour duration of the Thala Vadhyam (pure rhythm) item on Saturday was far too long, even considering that it was led by the eminent Karaikudi Mani.

As can be seen on the Internet leading Indian artists tour the whole of North America over weeks and give many series of reasonably priced concerts, usually in university cities. It should be possible to get these artists to do the same in much smaller Britain, which is not just London.

Dr. S. Sriharan, York

Arani's Bharatanatya Arangetram in Chennai

On 18th August 2002 the Bharatanatya Arangetram of Selvi Arani Sivapathasundaram was held at the Music Academy, Chennai. Resident in the UK, Arani was trained from an early age at the London Kendra of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan by Sri Prakash Yadagudde, Bhavan's distinguished resident dance teacher, himself a leading Bharatanatya dancer. Bhavan's teacher Smt Sivasakthi Sivanesan - Vocal, Sri M.Balachandar - Mridangam and Sri Balu Raghuraraman - Violin, had also travelled from London to accompany her and were joined by Sri T. L. Sarvanan - Flute.

The performance opened with a Pushpanjali, an invocation to God Ganesa in Raga Amrithavshi, Tala Adi followed by Kalittokai Kadavul Valttu, an unusual choice, set to music by Rajkumar Bharati, and demonstrating the three types of dance performed by Lord Siva. With the Alarippu in Raga Nattai, Tala Tisra Ekam, we saw the gradual awakening of the dancer's body beginning with tiny movements of the eyes, eyebrows, neck and shoulders until all the limbs are extended as though a flower is opening and the dancer offers herself to God. The Jatiswaram that followed in Raga Ranjani, Tala Rupakam showed us the neat footwork, grace, fluid movements and rhythmic control of the young artiste while the Shabdam, Tillai Ambalam in Ragamallika, Tala Misra Chapu, demonstrated her skill in abhinaya as she described Lord Siva and her love and longing for him.

The main item of the evening, the Varnam " Allam Valla Vayaloor Murugan Arulaale" was specially composed by Rajkumar Bharati in Raga Charukesi, Tala Adi. This demanding piece, evoking Lord Murugan's miraculous birth, his many feats and wooing of Valli while disguised as an old man calls for the portrayal of youth and age, strength, beauty and all the rasas. These were skilfully shown to us by Arani and interspersed with pure dance performed with impeccable rhythmic sense, grace and charm.

"Vadavaraiya Matthaaki" from Ilangovadikal's Silappatikaram sang in Ragamalika, Tala Adi, contrasted the ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu, the ferocity of Narasimha, the charm of the youthful Lord Krishna and his enigmatic presence while saving Draupadi being especially impressive.

The classic Tamil song "Cinnanchiru Kiliye" composed by Subramanya Bharatiyar in Ragamalika, Tala Adi, provided yet another contrast, as with great tenderness, love and grace Arani described her feelings for the child Kannamma.

The Chief Guest, Padmashri Thirumati Chitra Visweswaran and the Guest of Honour, Dr. John Marr paid tribute to the dedication and skill of the young dancer, and her guru, parents and musicians, before the arangetram drew to a close with a Tillana in Raga Maand, Tala Adi composed by Lalgudi G Jayaraman. This joyful, exuberant dance, ornamented with sculptural poses portrayed the Goddess Parvati in all her power, grace and radiance, beautifully depicted by Arani, together with the concluding Mangalam, made a fitting finale to a delightful evening. The performance was very ably compered by Mr. S. Mohanarajah and Miss M. Narmatha.

- Wendy A. P. Marr

A celebration with a difference

It is said that to have a decent stab at predicting the future one should always pay some heed to the past. I was reminded of this during the week-end of 22nd, and 23rd. September 2002 when nearly 500 Tamil Christians living in and around London gathered together at Rivercourt Methodist Church, King Street, Hammersmith, London W6 to engage themselves in a weekend of festivities. Although their minds were for the most part thinking about the future the occasion marked the celebration of the **Thirtieth Anniversary** since a small group of Christian Tamils with a visionary zeal met informally at the **Putney Methodist Church** in May 1972 to hold a worship in Tamil in London.

The celebration started with a Cultural Evening **"Eyal Isai Nadaham"** on the Saturday. It commenced with the Traditional lamp being lit by Mrs. Thamotheram followed with the singing of a celebratory song, specially composed and sung for the occasion by Mrs Punitha Perinparajah. The younger members of the congregation under the tutelage of Mrs Rathika Rajan provided the bulk of the evening's entertainment. The senior members of the congregation themselves contributed some item of their own to what was a truly cross cultural evening. The short sketch in English titled "Chips and Curry" to the background music of the 'Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves' from Verdi's Opera – Nabucco (which was master – minded by the Minister Revd. Barnabas Alexander) was fitting finale to a splendid evening's entertainment capped off by the traditional Anniversary Fellowship Meal.

Sunday the 23rd September heralded the holding of the Thirtieth Anniversary Service. This service commenced with a thevaram beautifully sung by Mr. Jela Selvarajasingham and amid the typically lusty Tamil lyric singing by the congregation there was also a special lyric sung by the Tamil choir lead by Mrs Chan-dra Nirmalandan and Mrs Devaki Rajupillai. The Founder Members provided a Tamil Traditional Hymn. The Congregation was delighted to hear a very thought provoking and inspiring sermon delivered by none other than the Superintendent Methodist Minister for Putney Circuit: Revd. John Cooke, who was a specially invited guest at this service. The resident Minister Revd. Alexander conducted this Eucharist service.

- Pakkiam Perinparajah.

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